SERMONS

PREACHED IN CHINA,

BY THE

REV. WALTER M. LOWRIE.

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1851.

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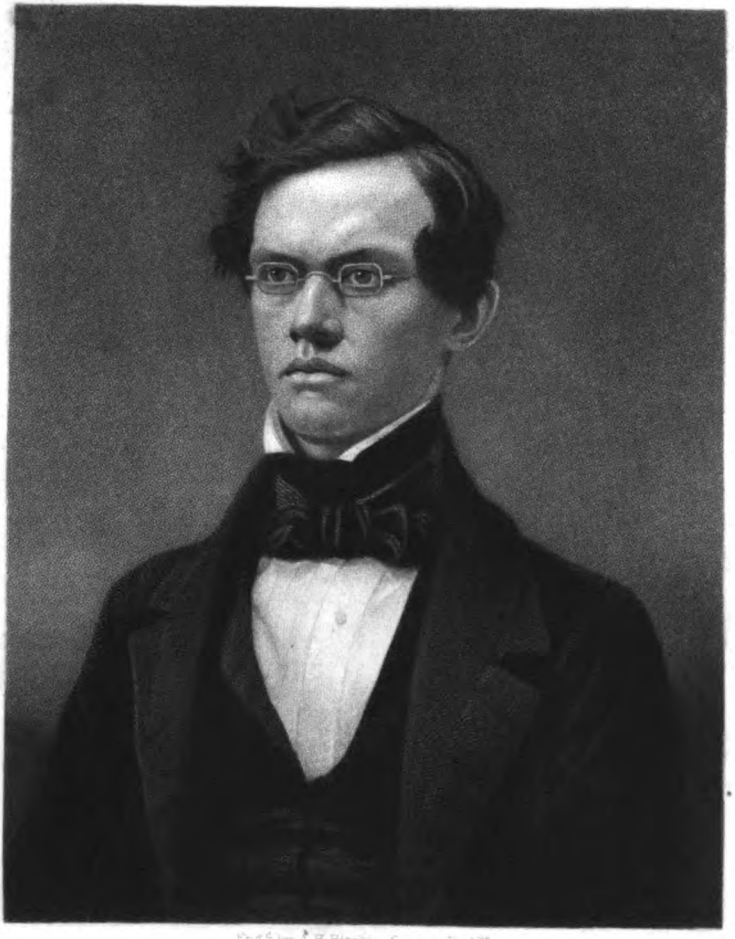
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PREFACE.

THE following sermons were all prepared and preached in China, at Macao, Ningpo and Shanghai, as will appear by the times and places noted on each respectively.

For more than two years after they were received from China, there was no thought of giving any of them to the public. His father's family indeed perused them with interest, as memorials of one very dear to them. During the present year they were read by others, and they believed that if they were published, they would be acceptable and profitable to the religious community. An esteemed friend who cherishes the memory of the departed Missionary, assumed the entire charge of the edition, stipulating merely that the proceeds of the sale should be paid to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church.

The circumstances under which the most of these sermons were prepared and preached are thus given by himself in a letter to a friend, dated Macao, Dec. 27, 1844.

"Since April, 1843, I have preached in English, once a week, to a small congregation of English and Americans, some of whom are pious. It is the custom of most of the missionaries just to take printed sermons and read them off, which is well known by the people. I have done so myself several times, but never liked the plan, nor felt comfortable in adopting it. As the people who attend are very intelligent, I found it required a good deal of care to prepare sermons that would be profitable; and that I could give most instruction in the fewest words, and with

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least labor to myself, by writing out my sermons. I have done this commonly, and have now nearly fifty written discourses, besides several skeletons. As I lost all my written sermons when shipwrecked, the preparation of these has been attended with some degree of labor, and takes as much time as I can at present afford to give. I felt, indeed, some scruple about giving so much time to a work not directly the one for which I came here, but felt satisfied about it on considering that I am still young, and the labor and study of preparing sermons would be of essential benefit to me; and I have found it so. Preaching is a very delightful work, and I have only regretted that I could not give more time to it."—*Memoir*, p. 283.

When he reached Ningpo, his preaching in English was less frequent, as the brethren of the Mission conducted the English service in rotation. His last sermon preached in Shanghai, it will be seen, was but a few weeks before his lamented death, which occurred on the 19th of August, 1847.

The last sermon he preached to the native Chinese in Ningpo, just before leaving that city to join the translating committee in Shanghai, is also given, in a translation by the Rev. Mr. S. Culbertson, as well as the original Chinese, in the colloquial dialect of Ningpo, expressed in Roman letters.

These sermons were neatly and plainly written, and they are published as they come from the pen of the author. Had they been revised by himself, they would doubtless have been improved. But this was not to be. They have been carried through the press by his father, and although the task has renewed, and even deepened, many sad recollections, it has not been without profit to himself.

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SERMON I.

CHRIST MADE SIN FOR US.

He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—2 Corinthians v. 21.

The writings of the Apostle Paul are distinguished by an uncommon vigor and animation. His whole soul was in everything he undertook; and whether we see him in social intercourse, or in his epistolatory correspondence, or in his great work of preaching the Gospel, his mind was still bent to the one object of proclaiming salvation through Christ and Him crucified. Hence his writings are distinguished by frequent emphatic sentences, which breathe out the ardor with which he engaged in his work. A remarkable trait in his epistles is the frequency with which he comprises an outline of the whole plan of salvation in a single sentence. They are outlines, it is true, which need to be filled up from other parts of his writings, yet are they complete outlines. Many examples could easily be given, among them are the following. *Jesus Christ is, of God, made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption,* 1 Cor. i. 30. So also, these, *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,* Gal. iii. 13. *Ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ,* Eph. ii. 13. *It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings,* Heb. ii. 10. Not to multiply examples, it is sufficient to add, that the text is an example of the same kind. *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* It is further remarkable, that all these compendious outlines of the plan of salvation, present it to our view, each in a different light. It is too glorious an object to be fully comprehended, if considered only in one aspect. So glorious is it, indeed, that it shall be an eter-

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nal subject of contemplation to the saints in heaven, and it is no wonder that the apostle felt as if he could not dwell upon it too long, or present it in too many aspects to his hearers and readers. And after all, how little do we know of it! At present we see, but as through a glass, darkly. Hereafter, it may be our happy lot to behold *with open face, the glory of the Lord, being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord,* 1 Cor. iii. 18. In the words before us there are three things worthy of notice.

1. The character of Jesus Christ. *He knew no sin.*

2. The treatment he received by divine appointment. *He hath made him to be sin for us.*

3. The object of this treatment. *That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

He knew no sin. The expression is remarkable. There was no sin in himself, neither did he approve of it in others, or countenance it in any way. His great object in coming to the world was to destroy sin, and how then could it be supposed that he would have any fellowship with it? There is a nicety in the idiom of the original here, which is not susceptible of a literal translation into our language. Not only does the expression used import that he never had sinned, and was in no proper sense a sinner—it also implies, that he was and is so holy, that the idea of sin cannot be conceived of, in connection with him. His name therefore is synonymous with holiness itself, and he is purer than gold seven times tried in the fire.

It is hard for us to conceive of a sinless being in human form, dwelling upon the earth. We see so much of sin around us, we feel it so constantly within us, intruding as it does into our most holy services, that we scarce can comprehend how any one partaking of our nature can be free from it. How was it possible that Christ should never sin? In conduct we can with little difficulty suppose that his outward deportment was blameless. Nay, we can even conceive of one of our race who so carefully guards himself, that his tongue never errs—but how shall the heart be kept so pure, that no stain shall ever defile it? How shall that mirror be preserved so bright, that the face of God may be seen therein, reflected with unclouded clearness? But let us not measure Jesus Christ by our own low standard. Partaking as he did of our nature, he was yet infinitely superior to us. The world tried to allure him, and Satan used all his efforts to tempt

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him to sin, but in vain. We have the testimony of his nearest friends to this effect. The beloved disciple who leaned upon his bosom, declares, *In him was no sin*, 1 John iii. 5. Peter, who once in fear denied him, afterwards yielded up his life for him, and before he died, testified, *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, 1 Pet. ii. 22. But we are not left to gather this from the testimony of his friends alone. He himself, when surrounded by bitter enemies, who were seeking to kill him, and who even then had the stones in their hands with which they meant to stone him, could appeal to them, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* John viii. 46. How brightly did his perfect innocence shine, even by the confession of his enemies, when they crucified him as a malefactor! His accusers were obliged to seek false witnesses when they sought matter of accusation against him, Matt. xxvi. 59. One of his own disciples betrayed him, but even he *repented himself, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood*, Matt. xxvii. 4. The judge who gave sentence against him *took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person*, Matt. xxvii. 24. The thief crucified along with him said, *This man hath done nothing amiss*, Luke xxiii. 41; and the centurion who executed him, declared, *Certainly this was a righteous man*, Luke xxiii. 47. God himself, to whom he committed his spirit, accepted of him, and testified to his perfect holiness by raising him again from the dead, and exalting him to rule over all.

It was needful that our Saviour should be thus holy. He came to destroy sin, and therefore should have no fellowship with it. He came to be a sacrifice for sin, but the law required that the sacrificial lamb should be without spot or blemish. He came to satisfy the offended justice of God, and it was therefore necessary that justice should have no claims against himself. He came to teach the way of holiness, and to show by his own example what it really is—but how could he do this, if not perfectly holy himself? He shall come to be our final judge, but the judge of all must be above every suspicion of evil. He will be the object of adoration and praise to the myriads of the heavenly host forever and ever: but this he never could be, if not perfectly holy, for those heavenly beings could not adore an unholy God.

2. Yet of this Being, thus pure and holy, it is expressly declared, he hath been *made sin for us*. This of course cannot mean, that any change was wrought in him, causing him to become unholy

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—for this is abhorrent to all our ideas of his character, and to all the declarations of the Scriptures respecting him. The meaning is not that in himself he became sinful, but that in the eyes of others, and especially of God the Father, he was *made sin for us*. Without entering into the various controversies regarding the meaning of this and kindred passages of Scriptures, it is sufficient to remark, that its obvious meaning is two-fold. He was made a *sin-offering* for us, and in order that he might become such a sin-offering, he was regarded and treated as a sinner. This last is the prominent idea, and as it completely includes the other, alone needs to be considered.

The object of Christ in assuming our nature was to make atonement for our sins, and thus rescue us from the condemning power of the law. This could be done only by his taking our place, and suffering the punishment due to our sins. In other words, by his becoming surety for us, and in being regarded and treated as if he and not we, had been the object of divine wrath;—and surely it needs but little knowledge of his history to see that he was thus regarded and treated, for no human malefactor ever suffered such accumulated sorrows as met upon the head of Christ. The prophet who foresaw his advent so long beforehand, predicted that he would be *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, Is. liii. 3, and his whole history amply confirms the prophecy.

1. The very first step in his course on earth was one of the deepest humiliation. He had been seated on the highest throne in the universe, and the splendors of the Godhead shone around his brow. Adoring angels bowed before him, and in *the bosom of the Father* he was *daily his delight, rejoicing always before him*, Prov. viii. 30. But when the appointed time came, he left that throne with its adoring hosts. He tore himself away, in a measure, from his communion with the Father, and veiling for a while the glories of his Divinity, he assumed the form of man,—the lowest, for aught we know, of all the rational creatures he had made. But this great humiliation cannot be better expressed than in the words of the apostle. *Being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man*, Phil. ii. 6, 7. And when he came into the world, what station did he assume? Not that of a wealthy and powerful monarch. No troops of courtiers waited on his steps,—no human armies moved at his command. A few women ministered

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to him,—a few fishermen attended him, and the humblest fare supplied the demands of nature. No palace received him, for oftentimes, though *the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of Man had not where to lay his head.* And what treatment did he receive from those whom he came to save? In the emphatic language of the evangelist, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*, John i. 11. Although he moved in so humble a sphere, he enjoyed but little of the amenities of social life,—for we read of but few families that loved to receive him,—of but few persons who dared to continue with him, when the rulers set their faces against him. He was an object of scorn, and contempt, or else of reproach; of untiring malice, and of unceasing persecution to the body of the nation among whom he moved. Possessing the keenest sensibilities, and the liveliest sympathy for everything that is lovely among men, he was tried again and again with the unkindness and desertion of friends,—with being forsaken by his own disciples in the hour of his utmost need,—and being betrayed by one who had often eaten of his bread, and seen his works, and done wonders in his name, and that too, for a sum that only equalled the pitiful price of a slave! Desirous to do good to those with whom he associated, his kindness was often met by refusals or neglect, so that he could do no mighty works among them by reason of their unbelief. Possessing, as he did, the utmost conceivable abhorrence of sin, he was yet obliged to associate daily and hourly with those whom he himself described as being like sepulchres, *full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness*, Matt. xxiii. 27. Possessing as he did, the most perfect knowledge of the human heart, he saw that many of those with whom he associated, even while they professed kindness and respect, *were thinking evil of him in their hearts*, Matt. ix. 4, such knowledge could not but be painful to him,—but how much more painful was it, when they openly, and to his face, called him *a blasphemer and a devil*, Matt. ix. 3; John viii. 48; John x. 33. No wonder that in sorrow and in indignation, he exclaimed, *Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest!* John xviii. 36. What is so hard to bear as misrepresentation and slander? Even when supported by conscious innocence, it is a bitter thing to have one's character unjustly traduced; but who ever drank so deep of this bitter cup as did Jesus Christ?

But passing by all the other sufferings of our Saviour, con-

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sider for a moment those that attended the close of his life. The copiousness of that most copious of all languages in which the New Testament is written, is exhausted in the effort to portray the sorrows of his soul. The sufferings of his body were great, when *his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*, and when so great was his exhaustion, that the presence of a heavenly messenger was needed to strengthen him; but as an old writer has well remarked, it was "the sorrows of his soul that were thē soul of his sorrows." *He began to be sorrowful and very heavy, and said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death*, Matt. xxvi. 37, 38. Nor was this agony a mere temporary cloud that passed over his mind. It lasted all that "dark and doleful night" and all the next day, when surrounded by the insulting priests and jeering crowd,—and when hurried through the forms of a mock trial, to the cross. Upon that torturing tree he gave vent to his sorrows in the exclamation, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and as if even this strong exclamation did not exhaust the intensity of his feelings, and human language were insufficient to express the sorrows of his soul, he cried again *with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost*, Mark xv. 34, 37.

Much comment is unnecessary here. What malefactor ever suffered, as Christ did? Who was ever regarded and treated as a sinner, worthy of the severest sufferings, if he was not? And be it observed too, that all this did not come upon him without the knowledge and consent of the Father. This we might know, even if it were not so revealed—but it is expressly so declared. Not to mention that Christ himself recognized this, when he prayed, *Oh! my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, the apostle in the text plainly asserts it to be the intention of the Father, that these things should come upon him. *He hath made him to be sin for us*,—although it was by *wicked hands that Christ was crucified and slain*, yet it was also by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, Acts ii. 23.

For what purpose, then, was Christ thus afflicted? Why did God suffer all these evils to meet upon him? For himself, as an innocent and holy being, he could not suffer. Some men may account for his sufferings by saying, that God in his sovereignty may inflict sufferings even on an innocent being. But this is not so. God may deprive an innocent being of the life he gave it, but, and I say it with reverence, God himself cannot, and will not, inflict one moment's suffering upon an innocent being, and

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still less upon his own Son, unless that being be so connected with guilty creatures, that his sufferings are for their sakes. And this was the case with Christ. Not for himself, but for us, was he regarded and treated as a sinner. Not for himself, but for us, was his soul made an offering for sin,—not for himself, but for us, did he *humble himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* This was the great object of the sufferings of Christ, and to this, in the last place, is your attention invited.

Naturally, we are all sinners. I know that men are slow to believe this doctrine, for of all others it is the most unpalatable to our self-love. But if there be any confidence to be reposed on the universal testimony of experience,—if there be any truth in the word of God, then this doctrine is true. We are guilty in the sight of God; we are exposed to his everlasting curse; we are condemned already, and if a way of escape be not found, the punishment that divine and eternal justice demands will be inflicted on us. In order that we may escape, it is not sufficient that from henceforth we should live perfectly holy lives, even if that were possible, which for us it is not. There is a long catalogue of sins marked against us, which must be all wiped away ere we can go free. These sinful hearts of ours, too, must be thoroughly renewed, and strength be afforded us to persevere in the way of holiness, or there can be no hope for us. But how shall all this be done? No efforts of our own could deliver us. No created power can perform all that is required. Ask the friendless and penniless captive, who lies chained in his deep dungeon, to pay his ransom and go free, and will he not say, that you mock him, by such a proposal? So should we say, to those who tell us that our own righteousness can save us. No; this work exceeds all the powers of nature, but it does not exceed the power of Christ. The object of his deep humiliation, and of all his intense and bitter sufferings, was to atone for our sins, and to procure a righteousness through which we might come with acceptance before God. All this he has done, by his obedience unto death; and now the only question that remains is, How shall we obtain the benefits thus procured for us? The answer to this is contained in the words of the apostle before us, *that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* By the words, in him, the apostle here refers to that intimate union which exists,

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and must ever exist, between Christ and all those who partake of the benefits of his salvation. It is a union so intimate, that Christ and his people are considered as one body,—he the head, and they the members,—and the work done by him is regarded as if it were done by them, and the sufferings endured by him as if endured by them, and the righteousness of which he is the procurer is considered as belonging to them. This union between Christ and every one of his true followers, so vitally important to the salvation of the soul, is effected by faith,—that living, saving faith, which receives Christ, and rests upon him alone for salvation,—which renounces all confidence in our own merits or works, and pleads only the merits of Christ, and which shows itself to be genuinely working by love, and producing those effects upon the heart and life which the word of God requires. Would you, then, be saved from sin, and be made the righteousness of God? My direction to you, is that which the apostle gave to the jailer at Philippi, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.* So shall it be accomplished, and ye shall be saved.

We may learn, from the review of what has been said: 1. The exceeding greatness of the love of God, and of Christ. You have often heard of the sacrifices that some have made for their friends, but who of you ever heard of sacrifices and sufferings endured for friends, such as Christ endured for his enemies? Make the case your own. Would you consent, even for a few years, to live in poverty and reproach for another? to walk in our streets with the finger of scorn pointed at you? to bear the sneers and malice, and the insults and persecutions, of those in every way beneath you? Christ has done more, infinitely more than all this, for his enemies! *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die: but God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Rom. v. 7. Surely, herein is love! 2. We are also taught by it, very impressively, the vileness of sin, and its hatefulness to God, when, for its extirpation, Christ was willing *to be made sin for us.* Men may count sin a light matter, while they roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues,—but Christ thought not so, when he left his high and glorious habitation to make atonement for it,—he thought not so, in his bitter agony in the garden,—he thought not so, when stretched upon the cross between heaven and earth. It ought to produce many serious thoughts in our minds, when we consider that it was not for himself, but for us,

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that he suffered all this. And surely, if there is a spark of ingenuousness left in our minds, it will occasion us bitter mourning that we have been the direct means of causing all this suffering to fall upon him. Suppose that the imprudence of any one of you had caused a beloved friend to lose property and life together, with what feelings would you reflect upon your conduct afterwards? It was in reference to such a feeling as this, that it was predicted by the prophet, *They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and they shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born*, Zech. xii. 10.

Finally. We learn hence the completeness of this salvation, and the importance of diligently seeking to secure an interest in it. It cannot be supposed that Christ would suffer so much, and yet leave his work unfinished. It cannot be supposed that any flaw is to be found in that which was devised in the councils of eternity, and wrought out in time, with such expense to the Son of God. *He hath done all things well.* And surely, if he has thought it worth his while to do all this for us, it is more than worth your while, my hearers, to see to it that you lose not the benefits of what he has done, and now so freely offers to you. *How shall you escape, if you neglect this great salvation?*

MACAO, April 30, 1848.

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SERMON II.

PRAISE.

Oh praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great towards us; and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord.—PSALM cxvii.

THIS is the shortest psalm, but by no means the least important in the whole book. Its author is not certainly known, nor the time of its composition. It is an exhortation to praise Jehovah, on account of his great goodness, and faithfulness in keeping his promises. But it is not merely an exhortation. It includes a prophetical address to all the nations of the earth, showing that all the human race is to be united into one harmonious body, and that not merely the Jews but also the Gentiles should engage in the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is manifest not only from an examination of the psalm itself, but also from the testimony of the apostle Paul, who quotes it in the Epistle to the Romans, xv. 11. After affirming that Jesus Christ was *a minister of the circumcision*, that is, of the Jews, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; he adds, that another object of his mission to the world, was that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy,—which he confirms by adducing this among other predictions of the Old Testament.

The first verse contains an exhortation to all nations, to praise Jehovah; and this exhortation, according to the usual parallelism of Hebrew poetry, is immediately repeated in slightly different words. The following verse gives the reasons why Jehovah is thus worthy to be praised, and the psalm concludes with the exhortation with which it commenced, *Praise ye the Lord.* This address to the nations of the earth comes in the name of the united church of the Jews, and the Gentiles. Once there was no such union,—for the Jews, proud of their distinction, as the chosen people of God, refused all intercourse in religion with

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other nations; and the Gentile hating such exclusiveness, and dreading a religion that required such holiness of heart and life, refused to associate with the Jew. But the cross of Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition, and made both one, and the writer of the psalm appears to have forgotten that such a distinction existed. The conception of the mercy of God through Christ has swallowed up every envious and jealous thought, and he is only anxious that all nations should praise that being whose attributes are so gloriously manifested towards our race.

Oh praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people. Praise is the giving to another the honor due for his excellent qualities. When applied to God, it is the natural and unfeigned exhibition of our esteem for those attributes, which excite our approbation. It implies a right apprehension of the *mighty acts*, and the *excellent greatness of the Lord.* It implies that we possess some knowledge of the goodness of the Lord, and that his *glory is above the earth and the heavens.* The command, *praise ye the Lord*, is one that is frequently repeated, and not simply repeated, it is also enforced with an array of motives which show it to be a command of great importance. In some of the psalms, the sole object seems to be to call upon men to magnify the name of the Lord; and we meet but with few examples of devotion in the Scriptures in which praise does not form a part. There is a distinction to be made between praise and thanksgiving. We praise God when we declare his glory,—we offer thanksgiving when we recognize his goodness as exercised towards ourselves. The former may be offered with acceptance, when the heart is overwhelmed with sorrow, for God is oftentimes *glorified in the fires*, Is. xxiv. 15,—but it is hard to offer the latter if the mind is not in a cheerful frame. Yet it is not possible to offer either aright, if the heart be at enmity with God. It is true that God makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and to show forth his own glory, but this is contrary to, or aside from their intention, and they are not therefore accepted. It was no merit in the Assyrian monarch, that he executed the commission and the charge against the people of God's wrath, *for he meant not so, neither did his heart think so*, Is. x. 7. It was no worthy action in Balaam, that he declared so truly of God, that he was not *a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent*, Numb. xxiii. 19,—or that he predicted so much good to Israel. His heart's design was to curse Israel—his wish was that God might repent—and it was only by

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constraint that he spake as he did. Jehovah obtained glory to himself, by the words of his mouth, but he punished him for the thoughts of his heart. None can praise God aright but those who truly love him, and the command with which the psalm opens, to praise the Lord, requires that we turn to him, with the whole heart, in order that we may praise him.

But why are we thus earnestly called upon to celebrate the praises of God? Why should we, who are surrounded with so many pleasing objects, turn aside from them to worship a being we have never seen? We need not turn aside. Everywhere there is a place to praise him, and every object around us answers our questions. The world we inhabit is one vast temple, erected for the glory of God, and every object it contains, bears an inscription that proclaims his excellency. It was the contemplation of the attributes of God, as displayed in the beauty and magnificence of our earthly home, with its varied ornaments and comforts,—and still more, in the wise and bounteous supplies provided for the necessities of our immortal souls, that called forth the psalmist's grateful adoration. But more than this. The child of God rejoices in his Father's attributes, not merely because of the interest he himself has in them, but because of their intrinsic and infinite excellence. We admire more, the fulness of a river, than the little stream which merely quenches our thirst; so we adore the hand that bountifully supplies the wants of all, and scattering showers, even on the desert, has still an abundance left,—more than we should the same hand, were we the sole recipients of the benefits it conveys.

The attributes of God here mentioned, as worthy of our special gratitude and adoration, are mercy and truth. It is remarkable how often these two attributes are conjointly mentioned. All the paths of the Lord are *mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies*, Ps. xxv. 10, and Abraham and Jacob, as well as David, and hosts of others, have found reason to say, *Mercy shall be built up forever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens*, Ps. lxxxix. 2. By the mercy of God is to be understood his free and undeserved favor towards the human race, which is especially manifested in the redemption of our race through Christ; while by his truth, is evidently intended his faithfulness in performing all his promises, and in *continuing* to exercise towards his people the mercy which he once began to exercise. As Moses said to the Israelites, so may it be said in our

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days, *The Lord thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he made unto them*, Deut. iv. 31.

For his merciful kindness is great towards us. The kindness of God is that favor which he exercises towards all his creatures, and that compassion in supplying their wants which are both so conspicuously displayed in his sending his son to redeem us. There are various other ways in which his kindness to his creatures is shown, but none which contain such a high evidence of his love as this. It is the crowning proof and includes all the rest. It is merciful, for we had not the slightest claim upon him for any good thing. Nay, the very word mercy includes the idea that the persons towards whom it is exercised are offenders, and deserving of punishment, and such is really our case.

This mercy is not exercised towards us in that contracted manner, that our feeble conceptions might have anticipated. It is God who bestows it, and the gift is offered with a fulness and a freeness worthy of the giver. *His merciful kindness is great towards us*, but not after our ideas of greatness. The ocean is great when it reposes in the calm, or rolls in the tempest; the earth is great in the vastness, and swiftness, and precision of its annual motion; and the starry heavens, and the untold systems of worlds beyond them, are great, and these all declare his glory; but his merciful kindness is greater far than these, for the fulness of the sea is but a drop compared with those wells from which the waters of salvation are drawn; and the magnificence of the rolling world and shining stars but dimly twinkles when compared with the radiance that beams from the cross of Christ. Count not this language, mere exaggerated declamation. Lift your eyes to that bright world whose inhabitants dwell in the immediate presence of God. *Behold the multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and tongues, and people standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands*, Rev. vii. 9. Who are these? Whence came they? By what right do they thus stand before the throne? Well may we ask such questions! These were once men of like passions with ourselves, and compassed about with infirmities like our own. How came they to enter heaven and possess such a glorious inheritance? Through no worthiness of their own, but through the mercy of God in Christ. That mercy was great, but who shall declare all its greatness?

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It prompted the Son of God to assume our nature—to be made sin for us—to suffer and to die in our stead. Hear their own song of praise to him—*Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thine own blood*, Rev. v. 9. Surely man cannot fathom the depths of God's love, nor worlds exhaust the fulness of God's merciful kindness. Great as it is in itself, it is if possible still greater when we consider to whom it is exercised. Not to the angels, greater in might and excelling in power, who kept not their first estate—but towards us, worms of the dust enslaved by sin, exposed to all the miseries of this life, and to the pains of hell forever—towards us who had no deliverer and no hope, and who were rapidly hastening on to death—the death of the body, and more terrible still, the death of the soul—the second death. Yea, *His merciful kindness is great towards us.* No obstacles appalled the Son of God. No difficulties deterred him from completing the work he had begun. Strong in the might of his divinity, he stood alone against opposing hosts, and vanquished Satan and his legions, to bring salvation to us.

It was no merely temporary impulse that prompted him thus to act. It was no merely transient deliverance that he wrought. His merciful kindness is great towards us, and his truth endureth forever. Mercy prompts him to form his purposes of love, and to give us great and precious promises, and his unchanging truth and fidelity sustains those purposes, and fulfils those promises. There was gloom and sadness in our world when our first parents ate the forbidden fruit.

> "Earth trembled from her entrails as again
> In pangs; and nature gave a second groan.
> Sky lowered and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completing of the mortal sin
> Original."

What hope could there be for man after such an offence? None, had not mercy filled the throne. But mercy prevailed, and in the sentence pronounced upon the serpent was contained an intimation that God had not utterly cast off the human race. It is most deeply interesting to trace the various steps by which mercy advanced in the design of saving men, and how amidst all difficulties, and obstacles, the faithfulness of God sustained the purposes that mercy first devised. At one time almost the whole human race had utterly apostatized from God, and it be-

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came necessary for him to sweep them from off the face of the earth. But there was one man who still retained his integrity, and mercy preserved him alive, when the flood of waters destroyed the rest of mankind. In his family the church was perpetuated; and when, again, the posterity of Noah had almost all departed from God, one of his descendants was chosen to be the depositary of the promise of God. To Abraham were the promises made, exceeding great and precious; for in him, and in his seed, were all the families of the earth to be blessed. Trace the history of his descendants till the time of Christ, and behold how the mercy of God bore with them in their provocations, and how his faithfulness to the covenant made with their fathers sustained them in the wilderness, and fed them in the desert; how it delivered them from the hands of their enemies, and prospered them in the works of their hands; how as a wise father, he chastised their iniquities, and as a covenant-keeping God he preserved them a peculiar people, until the appointed time for the completion of the covenant. The Son of God appeared upon earth in due time, and the faithfulness of God still sustained him. Had it not been so, we might almost have feared, that great as was the love the Saviour bore for men, still when the trying hour came, and in his agony in the garden he prayed, *Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, he would have shrunk back from the work of redemption. But no! *The truth of the Lord endureth forever.* He would not make void his promises to Abraham, nor suffer his purposes to fail. The final results of all his mercy and truth to man, you may see, in the great multitude whom *No man can number, who stand before the throne, having come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. vii. 14. The song they sing is known to themselves alone—but surely, if they could now address us, who meet in the courts of God's house below, it would be in the words of the psalm we are considering, *His merciful kindness is great towards us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord.*

I presume there are few in this house, who do not admit the propriety of obeying the command contained in this Psalm, or who do not hope to experience the mercy and faithfulness of God, even in the highest manifestation of which it is capable, and of which we have just been speaking. But on what grounds do you hope to experience this mercy? or be benefited by this

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faithfulness of God? For, be it remembered, though the mercy of God is offered to all, it is not partaken of by all. Nay, there is too much reason to fear, that the great majority of nominal Christians never know by experience what it is. Men are in the habit of resting on some general belief that God is too merciful to condemn them forever. Some vague and indefinite notions of his goodness and grace float across their minds, and they do not trouble themselves to inquire farther. This is the error on which millions of immortal souls are lost forever. God is merciful, yea, infinitely merciful,—but he is merciful in his own way, and that way is so clearly delineated in his word, that men are utterly inexcusable if they do not see it, and walk therein. Common mercies are bestowed upon all without exception, the evil as well as the good, for he maketh his sun to shine, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust; but this special mercy is to be obtained only by those who are in Christ. For to those out of Christ, *our God is a consuming fire*, Heb. xii. 29. *There is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, Acts iv. 12. This is the reason why the saints in heaven ascribe so much honor to the Saviour, because he redeemed them by his own blood. Mercy does not wait for those who know him not; but to those who have fled to him for refuge, as the only hope set before him, there is preserved, by the faithfulness of God, an inheritance that never ends, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Macao, May 7, 1843.

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SERMON III.

HEALING THE TEN LEPERS.

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found, that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.—Luke xvii. 12–19.

It was always characteristic of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he went about doing good. Whenever we hear of him, be it in his youth, when sitting in the temple among the doctors of the law, or in his manhood, when his public ministry had commenced, he was still *about his Father's business*, and so faithfully, that the zeal of God's house even consumed him. The honor and glory of God, and the happiness and welfare of perishing men, were the great objects before him. "Like a current of vital air, he went through the length and breadth of the land, and his course was marked by long lines of light and gladness." Where he trod, the flowers sprang up beneath his footsteps,—where he looked, the dark clouds disappeared,—where he spoke, sorrow fled, and those who *mourned were comforted.* The number of miracles he performed was truly wonderful. We are not to suppose, that he wrought only those mighty acts which are either recorded or alluded to in the gospels. The evangelist John expressly assures us, *There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written*, John xxi. 25. It was not the object of the Holy Spirit, in recording those of which we pos-

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sess accounts, merely to excite an empty wonder and astonishment,—they were written for our instruction. They were intended to be deeply pondered, and to be compared with other parts of the Scriptures, in order that we may fully comprehend them, and mark the evidences of divinity that illuminate every act of our blessed Lord.

The miracle here recorded seems to have been performed in the course of our Saviour's last journey to Jerusalem. He had previously been spending some time in Galilee, under the jurisdiction of Herod. Luke xiii. 31, 32. The distance from the borders of Galilee and Samaria to Jerusalem, was about fifty miles, in a direct line; but he seems to have gone in a circuitous direction, sometimes visiting parts of Samaria, and at others parts of Galilee. Being his last journey, he was anxious to visit as many places as possible, and to proclaim in each the near approach of the kingdom he was about to establish. As he entered one of the villages on his route, he was met by ten of those melancholy and disgusting objects, some of whom are yet found as objects of curiosity and compassion in the East. They were lepers. Of the leprosy of the Scriptures, and in what respects it differed from the disease of that name in modern times, it is difficult to obtain a perfectly satisfactory account. It was a disease deeply rooted in the system, and affecting the whole body. At first, it commonly appeared in the form of a small reddish spot, either in the forehead or elsewhere. From this, it gradually spread over the body, accompanied by ulcers and sores. The joints became distorted,—the fingers sometimes dropped off from corruption,—and the miserable being lingered on, sometimes for years, an outcast from all society, but that of beings like himself; a mass of corruption, until the system was broken down, and he sank to the leper's grave. The body of one affected with this disease was covered with scales, or scurf, which were generally white,—hence the expression, so frequently occurring, *a leper white as snow*. It is somewhat uncertain whether it was infectious or not. In Judea, it was regarded as an immediate judgment of God. The leper was unclean, and no efforts were employed to heal him. The rules for the treatment of leprous persons, which are laid down with great minuteness in the Levitical law, required that the leper be shut out from all intercourse with society. Even his parents or children, or the wife of his own bosom, did not dare to approach him. He was unclean, and his touch, like that of a dead body, polluted every-

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thing he handled. He was obliged to wear mourning, and keep aloof from every uninfected person, himself warning them not to approach him too nearly. *The leper, in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be*, Lev. xiii. 45, 46.

It is difficult to conceive of a more melancholy position than that held by the lepers. Afflicted with an evil and an unclean disease, and entirely uncertain when, if ever, it should be removed. Shut out from all society, and under the ban of the Divine displeasure. Hope must have died away in the heart, when the priest looked upon them, and pronounced them lepers,—and the command to depart and dwell alone, must have filled them with despair.

> "Depart, depart, oh child
> Of Israel, from the temple of thy God,
> For he hath smote thee with the chastening rod,
> And to the desert wild,
> From all thou lovest, away thy feet must flee,
> That from thy plague his people may be free."

Thus it was with these of whom we here read. Relief they could find from no human source; but they had heard of the fame of Jesus, and hoping that he might compassionate their distress, and be able to relieve them, they put themselves in his way. They did not dare to approach near to him, and therefore *stood afar off*,—but they *lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* It was an appropriate prayer for a leper to offer. It was short, but it was heartfelt, and it was effectual, because it was addressed to that compassionate High Priest, who was easily touched with the feelings of human infirmities, and who never turned away a needy suppliant. We are not told the feelings that filled his mind when he saw them, but it is not hard to conjecture. On a former occasion, a single leper applied to him for cleansing, and his heart was moved with compassion towards him; but here was an accumulation of misery, that could not fail to awaken all his sympathies. He determined to relieve them, but he did it in a way that tried their faith, and showed their true characters. Instead of healing them on the spot, as he could easily have done, he simply commanded them *to go, and*

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show themselves to the priests. This was a tacit promise to heal them. According to the Jewish law, the priests alone had a right to pronounce men clean from the leprosy, and as that law was still in force, Christ, who came to fulfil all righteousness, on all occasions obeyed its precepts. His sending them to the priests, therefore, was equivalent to saying, By the time you have arrived at Jerusalem, you shall be healed, and the duly authorized ministers of the law shall receive you again, to the privileges from which you have been so long debarred. It will be immediately seen, that this was quite a trial to their faith. The journey to Jerusalem, to men in their situation, was a long and fatiguing one; if they should not be healed before their arrival there, it would be one of much trouble and inconvenience, for they could not associate with any whom they might meet; and if they should not be healed at all (for such a suggestion doubtless occurred to them), then their labor would be in vain; they would be laughed at, and sent away with renewed disgrace. To oppose all these considerations, they had only the simple words of Christ, *Go, show yourselves to the priests.* But their confidence in him, and their desire for healing were so great as to make them disregard all such suggestions, and in obedience to his command they went. How richly was their faith rewarded! *As they went they were cleansed.* They seem to have gone but a little way, when they found the scales fall off from their bodies, and felt the warm blood rush healthily through their veins, and the vigor of new life beating in all their limbs. Their flesh came again as the flesh of a little child, and they were clean! Who shall describe their joy at this sudden and unhoped for change? The sick man rejoices when his fever has left him, and he slowly regains his wonted health and vigor,—the exile rejoices when his eyes once more rest on the home, and the friends of his youth,—the condemned criminal rejoices when his chains are struck off, and his prison doors opened and himself sent forth free,—but the joy of the lepers must have been greater than theirs. Here was deliverance from a loathsome, painful, and incurable disease,—one that shut them out from the society of friends, and which was indeed the condemning sentence of God himself. No longer exiles, no longer outcasts,—the temple of their God was reopened to them, and the scenes of their youth invited their return. Life, and health, and home, and friends,—these had been strange words to them, but they were strange no longer, for the rent garment, and

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the covering on the lip, and the ashes on the head were removed, and the cry *unclean, unclean,* no longer proceeded from their lips.

No wonder that one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, turned immediately back, for he does not seem to have waited till he went to Jerusalem, and with a loud voice glorified God. No wonder that he *fell down at his feet, giving him thanks.* Imagine, if you can, the words in which those thanks were expressed. Doubtless, language would be poor to picture forth the emotions that struggled in his breast, at such a time as that.

But who, or what was he who thus returned to glorify God? One who had never before read this account, would be disposed to say, Certainly he was a Jew, early trained to acknowledge the true God, and offer to him his thank-offerings and praise. For some great sin he had been thus sorely afflicted, but now the heavy hand of God is removed, and he has returned to own his renewed obligations! But alas! for the hardness of the human heart. Alas! for its insensibility to the favors of the giver of all good. Of the ten who were cleansed, nine appear to have been Jews, and one alone, a Samaritan; and yet he, of whom the least might have been expected, was the only one sensible of his duty. The Samaritans were a mongrel race, descended from the remnants of the ten tribes who were left in the land, when the nation was as a body removed, and the heathen whom the Assyrian king sent to occupy the land. They corrupted the worship of God by the addition of numerous idolatrous rites, and in attempting *to serve the Lord, and worship graven images,* they became objects of greater detestation to the Jews than even the heathen themselves. *The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans,* and our Saviour himself, declared that *they worshipped they knew not what.* It was therefore hardly to be expected that a Samaritan leper, should show more gratitude and true devotion, than those who had been carefully trained in all the laws of the Jewish faith. Hence, the expression of our Lord, *Were there not ten cleansed?* he exclaims, *but where are the nine?* It was a severe censure he cast upon them, when he added, *There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.* Yet, though he came alone, and though he was a stranger and an outcast, he was not therefore received with the less favor. He came to that good Shepherd, who cares even for the weak and diseased of his flock,—who does not refuse any, however despised by those that are strong. Our Lord looked upon him with favor, and graciously

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said, *Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.* By his faith in Christ in the first instance, he was cured of his leprosy, but by his living faith exemplified now in his gratitude, he was delivered from that more dangerous disease, the leprosy of sin. His soul was made whole, and he was henceforth numbered among the chosen people of Christ. We are not told anything farther respecting either him or his companions. Doubtless, they all proceeded to Jerusalem, in order to be received with due formality, to the rights and privileges of Jewish society,—and from what we have already seen of this Samaritan, we may well suppose, that as he went along, he would *publish the matter much, and blaze it abroad*, as did the first leper whose cleansing is recorded in the gospels, Mark i. 45.

There are many important lessons taught by this miracle, but space and time, allow the mention of only the following:—

1. We are taught here very impressively that *all faith* is not *saving faith*,—nay, that men may possess much of a certain kind of faith, and yet be very far from securing the approbation of God. It is perfectly manifest that all these lepers had faith in Christ, and even in a high degree. They believed that he was both able and willing to heal them, and when commanded by him to undertake a long journey, they unhesitatingly obeyed, though they had only his word to depend upon, as the ground of their hope for cleansing. Nor can we possibly suppose, that when they found themselves so completely cured, no joyful emotions passed through their minds. It is hard to believe that they were so depraved as not to feel at least a transient glow of gratitude to him whose word had healed them. Perhaps they made many promises to themselves, and resolved that at some time or other they would show their sense of the obligation conferred upon them. But we do not hear that they ever sought again the face of their benefactor, while we do hear him censuring their ingratitude, *Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?* And we hear him highly commending the conduct of the Samaritan, who acted so differently from his companions in suffering, and in blessing—*Arise, thy faith hath made thee whole.* In what respect then did his faith differ from theirs? In this, *that it wrought by love, and purified the heart.* The sense of obligation brought him back to the Saviour's feet, and the praises that were uttered from his lips, were only the expression of his heart's deep emotions. Their faith affected only the understanding, and therefore differed

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in no respect from that possessed by Simon Magus, who believed and was baptized, and yet remained in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, or that of the *devils who believe and tremble.* This affected his heart, and showed itself in his life; and the commendation which the Saviour bestowed on him, and the words with which he dismissed him, showed that his faith was acceptable to him.

2. The record of this miracle gives a melancholy picture of human nature, and of the insensibility of men to the favors they receive from their Creator. We are apt to think that those who receive great favors from God must be very grateful, and that those highly distinguished by him in outward advantages, will be proportionately zealous in his service. Certainly this should be so, for the natural impulses of the heart demand it. But, alas! it is far otherwise. Great privileges do not show great grace. Oftentimes those most highly favored are least sensible of their obligations; while true gratitude and zeal for God are found where least expected. In the case of the ten lepers, he alone, from whom the least was to be expected, was found to possess the right spirit. The conduct of the Jewish lepers, was but in miniature, that of the Jewish nation. No people on earth were so highly favored as they. What nation was there who had God so nigh unto them as the Lord their God was, in all things that they called upon him for? and what nation was there that had statutes and judgments so righteous as theirs? What nation was there that had received so many tokens of God's favor, or had made so many professions of zeal and gratitude and obedience as they? Yet, when their own long-expected Messiah came among them, how did they receive him? *He came to his own, and his own received him not,* John i. 11. The publicans and sinners believed, but they themselves in scorn exclaimed—*Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed?* From the east and the west, the Gentiles came and sat down with Abraham in the kingdom of heaven, but through their own madness the children of the kingdom were cast out. It was a terrible retribution that befell the highly-favored cities on the coast of the sea of Galilee. *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! and thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell; for if the mighty works which had been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day,* Matt. xi. 21, 23.

But while you wonder at, and condemn the criminal negligence

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and unbelief of the Jews, beware lest you seal your own condemnation. The privileges of the Jews were no greater than those that we enjoy; and there are but too few among ourselves who rightly improve the mercies granted to us. Who of you can say, I have rendered again unto the Lord according to the benefits received from him? God hath but poor service from many who are most bountifully fed by him. He hath more rent, and better paid him from a smoking cottage, than he has from some stately palaces!

3. This miracle is especially important as showing the power and character of Jesus Christ, in pointing out to us the way for needy sinners to approach and obtain his grace. It has already been mentioned that the Jews considered the leprosy incurable by human skill. They never used any means to cleanse those afflicted with it, but committed their case entirely to God, as the only being able to relieve them. The curing of the leprosy therefore was one of the strongest evidences of a divine mission. When Moses was sent to be the leader of the Israelites one of the proofs he gave, was the curing of the leprous hand. One of the most remarkable instances of the way in which the Israelites regarded this disease is found in the account of Naaman the Syrian. When his royal master sent him to Ahab, that Elisha might cure his disease, the Israelitish king supposed that the Assyrian monarch wished to seek a quarrel with him by requiring him to perform an impossibility. *He rent his clothes, and said, Am I God to kill, and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?* 2 Kings v. 7. But when these men came to Christ to be cleansed of this incurable disease, he made no objection,—with a word he removed their plague, and sent them away rejoicing. By his own power he relieved their maladies; and without reluctance, received the worship that one of them offered him in return. He was God, who had power *to kill and to make alive*, and *to recover men of their leprosy;* and the worship they offered him, he received as justly his due.

4. The manner in which he received the lepers, and sent them away, affords us great encouragement, when we wish to make supplications to him. In but too many particulars our case is as miserable, and helpless, and hopeless, as that of the lepers themselves. The poison of sin has so pervaded our whole nature, that we are by it utterly defiled. It shuts us out from the society of all holy beings, and utterly unfits us for communion with God,

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or for engaging in his service. The leper did not dare to appear in the temple of God, or pollute with his touch the vessels of the sanctuary. Sin ruins the soul, and brings destruction upon it, as surely as the plague of the leprosy destroyed the body. It is also as totally incurable by human efforts as that was, and nothing less than divine power can remove it from us.

"Sin, like a venomous disease,
Infects our vital blood;
The only balm is sovereign grace,
And the physician, God."

But pitiable and hopeless as our case is, if we look only to ourselves, there is deliverance if we but seek for it. Jesus Christ is as able to save us from sin, as he was to cure the leprosy, Matt. ix. 6. He alone has such power. Under the ancient Jewish law, none but God could cleanse the leper; none but the priest pronounce him clean. Christ as God forgives our sin; as our great high priest he both pronounces and makes us holy. This he is ever ready to do. If we but come to him as the lepers came, feeling our misery, feeling a desire to be relieved, believing that he is able to do it, then, though conscious guilt may make us *stand afar off*, yet if we lift up our voices, and cry unto him, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* He will hear our prayers, and grant our request. And this is our only hope, but, blessed be God, it is one that shall not be disappointed.

Macao, May 21, 1843.

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SERMON IV.

RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.—Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

The object of the mission of Jesus Christ to the world was the sublimest that ever entered into the mind of any being in the universe. He came to overcome Satan and vanquish death. He came to rescue a race sunk in misery and enslaved by sin. He came to assert the honor of God,—to proclaim the glory of his character,—to show the excellency of his nature, and to recover his rightful dominion over the world. These were objects worthy of the might of him who came to save. If obtained, no tongue could declare their greatness; but as well may be supposed, they were not easily accomplished,—for in this world, nothing great is ever effected without labor and sacrifice, and in this case especially, the way to glory led through shades and sorrows. The day is bright beyond conception, but it was ushered in by a night of darkness and of storms.

Very sad must have been the feelings of the disciples of Christ when they saw him ignominiously crucified,—but still more so, when they saw him giving up the ghost, and followed his lifeless and mangled body to the tomb. It was a sepulchre hewn in the rock, a great stone was rolled to the door, a seal set upon it, and a guard placed. That day was the preparation for the Sabbath. It was usually a time of solemn joy,—but not so now to the little band of Christ's followers. They had, strangely enough, misunderstood all that he told them concerning the kingdom he was about to establish. They utterly forgot his prediction that he must be put to death, and its cheering accompaniment, that he should rise again. The great stone and the seal,

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and the guard and death himself had removed the object of their hope from their eyes, and to their unbelief it seemed as though God's promise had now failed, and Christ's power been ended. It seemed as if Satan's victory were now complete, and hope for a while deserted them. *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*, Luke xxiv. 21. But now our enemies say in their hearts, *Ah, so would we have it. We have swallowed him up*, Ps. xxxv. 25. It was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on—the emblem of peace and rest, but it brought no rest to them, for the disappointment of cherished hopes is a bitter thing, and the dearer the hope, the bitterer the disappointment. Hope deferred even, maketh the heart sick, but hope utterly lost, is like the giving up of the ghost.

The Sabbath passed away with them in silence and sorrow, for though hope had apparently left them, they could not forget Him. His looks of affection were pictured on their hearts, and the music of his words yet lingered in their ears. As the next day dawned, several women proceeded to the place where they had seen him laid, with spices and ointment to embalm his body. Last at the cross, they were also first at the sepulchre. So completely had they given up the hope of ever seeing him they loved alive again, that their only solicitude was to preserve the dead body from decay, and to lavish upon it the attentions they could no more give to him. But wonderful events had occurred. It was the Lord of life who had been laid in that lonely tomb, and death had no power to retain him a moment longer than he chose. By his own power he burst those bonds, John ii. 19. x. 18. In his late conflict he overcame and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. True, he became obedient, even unto death; but it was of his own accord, that he gave up the ghost, and it was but for a little time that he suffered the grave to possess his body. When the time appointed in the counsels of God, and fixed by his own predictions, had come, he rose triumphant over death and the grave. Vain were all the efforts of his enemies to detain him. The stone and the seal, and the guard, and death itself were less to him than the cords with which Samson was bound, which were but as the flax when it toucheth the fire. There had been an earthquake,—an angel from heaven descended, to roll the stone away,—and he that was dead arose, not like Lazarus in his grave-clothes, again to die,—for he left the garments of mortality behind him, and lives for evermore. All this must

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have happened before the dawn of day; for Mary Magdalene, who seems to have come first to the sepulchre, came while *it was yet dark*, and even then saw the stone taken away. In her fear she left the companion with whom she came, and ran to call Peter and John. While she was absent, another company of women on the same affectionate errand came, and saw a vision of angels, who assured them that He whom they sought was not there. *Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen*, Luke xxiv. 5, 6. When they had gone, Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John. The two disciples inspected the sepulchre, but saw no angels, and departed, wondering at what had taken place, and Mary remained alone, weeping at the sepulchre. It was then that Jesus appeared to her. Tears dimmed her eyes, and she knew him not, till in his own familiar voice he said unto her, *Mary. She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni—Master!* After this he appeared to the other women, and sent them also to inform his disciples of his resurrection. But it was hard for them to believe this announcement. The news was too good to be true; and like Jacob of old, when told that Joseph was yet alive, their hearts died within them, and they could not believe. Return from the dead was no common event; the grave is not easily satisfied; death does not readily yield up his prey. Even after the Lord had appeared to Simon, and to the two disciples going to Emmaus, they could scarcely believe; and it was not till he himself had come among them and upbraided them for their hardness of heart and their unbelief, that they were convinced, and even after they were convinced, astonishment and fear and joy so overpowered them that they were confounded, and scarcely knew their own minds. For very joy they believed not, and wondered, until from further and frequent intercourse with him, they were satisfied that there could be no illusion. *He showed himself alive to them after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days*, Acts i. 3, and at one time, *by as many as five hundred of the brethren at once*, 1 Cor. xv. 6, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Those were pleasant interviews they had with him, when again they heard his gracious words, and saw his wondrous works. But it was not his purpose to remain with them in his human nature on earth. It was not necessary,—nay, it was not desirable, for himself had told them, *It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I*

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go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you, John xvi. 7.

The time drew near when he should depart out of this world unto the Father; and *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end*, John xiii. 1. In affectionate converse, he led them out by an oft frequented road, as far as to Bethany. Could we but have heard that conversation! But no record of it is left to us. His last recorded words were spoken in Jerusalem, and included the promise of the speedy coming of the Spirit. What further he said as they accompanied him to Bethany, we know not; perhaps it would not be well, for any but those called to be apostles, as they were, to know.

A very common mistake prevails as to the place of Christ's ascension; owing to a misunderstanding of the account in the Acts of the Apostles, most persons have supposed that it was from the top of the Mount of Olives, and a church has even been erected on the spot from which he is supposed to have ascended. But this is certainly incorrect. The text expressly asserts, that *He led his disciples out as far as to Bethany*, beyond the Mount of Olives, *and lifted up his hands and blessed them, and while he blessed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.* Oh, what a time was that! they had gathered around him to hear his last words, they gazed upon him with solemn awe, for already the glories of the upper sanctuary beamed around him, and while they beheld he was taken up,—not in haste, nor in fear, but slowly and majestically he ascended, and a cloud received him out of their sight. When Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind by a chariot of fire and horses of fire, Elisha could exclaim, *My father, My father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof*, but the disciples of Christ uttered no words, for their emotions were too deep for utterance. They were like men already released from the earth, and seemed to have already entered the portals of the eternal temple. What was the world with all its petty concerns to them, when they saw their risen Lord ascending, and found the inhabitants of the heavenly world standing by them in their triumphal apparel? The whole life of our Saviour on earth had been an object of most peculiar interest to the angels. They had predicted his coming, and announced his birth, and sung the glory of his advent. They had ministered to him in the desert, and strengthened him in the garden, and watched over him in the grave. They had welcomed him as he returned to life again,

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and two of them stood now by his disciples, to say to them, *This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Unnumbered hosts of them received him as he left the world and proceeded to his high throne in the heavens. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive,* Ps. lxviii. 17. Truly, we may say with the Psalmist, *God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises to our King, sing praises,* Ps. xlvii. 5.

It is not easy to estimate too highly the importance of the doctrines of the resurrection and ascension of Christ. It was a subject of frequent and express prediction by himself. *From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day,* Matt. xvi. 21. It was the proof he gave of his divine mission, when asked by the Jews what sign he gave, and by what authority he acted, he referred them to his resurrection—*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,* John ii. 19. So well were these predictions known, that after his burial, the Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying—*Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again,* Matt. xxvii. 63. Had he not risen, therefore, we could have regarded him in no other light than as a prophet of lies. We must have considered then that all his claims to be the Saviour of the world were false,—that he was a deceiver,—and to whom then could we have gone? As the apostle says, *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain—ye are yet in your sins,* 1 Cor. xv. 14. Of what avail then had it been to us, that he assumed our nature, that he dwelt among men, that he wrought miracles, that he preached glad tidings, that he suffered and died? If he rose not again we are most miserable, and must lie down in sorrow. But blessed be God! wonderful as the account is that tells us of his resurrection, it is one that cannot be doubted—for no fact in history is so firmly established. The day we celebrate as the Lord's day, is alone a sufficient proof. Why does the whole Christian church observe the first, instead of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath?

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Because on this day Christ rose from the dead, and it is therefore a day of gladness and joy to our souls.

The power of God as displayed in the resurrection of Christ is especially worthy of our notice. It is no common thing to see the grave give up its tenants, and those that sleep in the dust to arise. Especially in this case was it little to be expected. The God of this world, the devil, of whom it was a terrible characteristic that he *had the power of death*, Heb. ii. 14, had peculiar reasons for wishing to keep the Saviour in the tomb. He well knew that the continuance of his power, and the preservation of his kingdom among men, depended upon his defeating the predictions of Christ, and preventing his resurrection. To this point therefore was all the ingenuity and malice of hell directed, but all in vain.

He who had power *to lay his life down, had also power to take it again*, John x. 8, and on the third day he showed himself the conqueror of death and the grave. Behold here, *the working of the might of God's power*, as the apostle expresses it, *which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places*, Eph. i. 19, 20.

The effects of the resurrection of Christ are most glorious, and to us of the deepest moment. It was the seal of all he did, and the completion of our salvation. The work of atonement for sin was accomplished when he exclaimed on the cross—*It is finished*, and died for our sins; but the work of redemption was not completed until *he rose again for our justification*, Rom. iv. 25. It was thus that he destroyed death,—it was thus that he led captivity captive. He thus became the first fruits of them that slept, and his resurrection is the pledge that all his followers shall likewise rise to glory; as he has overcome death, so all his followers shall. The grave may for awhile possess their bodies, but its possession shall be but for a little time. On the morning of the Sabbath he rose from the tomb, leaving his grave-clothes behind him. When the morning of the Eternal Sabbath shall dawn, our bodies shall be raised incorruptible, no more to return to the dust; and we shall be changed. It will not be long till that time comes. It was but a few hours that Christ lay in the tomb, it is but a short time that we shall lie there, and if we have known the fellowship of his sufferings,—if we be now dead to the world, and our life be hid with Christ in God, then shall we also appear with him in glory. Then shall it be said to us, *Thy dead shall*

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live, with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead, Is. xxvi. 19. But it should excite you to watchfulness and diligence, to know that it is not every one who shall rejoice at that solemn time. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ*, Rev. xx. 6.

The ascension of Christ was a further step in his exaltation. He who had humbled himself so low for our sakes, who had not shrunk from the loathsome grave, was now *to be exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but in the world to come*, Eph. i. 21. It would, doubtless, have been pleasant to have had him remain in this world, to our weak faith, and often fainting hope, and flagging zeal; it would have been encouraging to have had a visible head to resort to. But it was not necessary, while the reasons for his going away were such, that it was better he should depart. He has gone, that he might send the Comforter. He has gone to intercede for his people, *for he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. He has gone that he might exercise the providential government of this world—yes, of all worlds in behalf of his blood-bought church. It may cause a smile on the part of some to hear so much importance attached by us to the affairs of the too commonly despised church of Christ. It may subject us to the charge of overweening vanity and self-conceit, when we claim for her, the special care, and deepest thoughts of the infinite Jehovah; but this arises from ignorance of her true importance in his eyes. When we read such passages as this—*He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye*, Zech. ii. 8; and this, *God hath made Christ to be head over all things for the church*, Eph. i. 22, it will be seen that it is impossible to estimate too highly her dignity and value in the eyes of her Maker. *She is a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God*, Is. lxii. 3.

The Saviour has gone to prepare a place for his disciples, and he himself has added, *If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also*, John xiv. 2, 3.

It is for this that we wait. The world may now look down upon the church of Christ, and scorn our expectations of future glory, as the vain dreams of enthusiasts, or the silly ravings of

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fanatics; but we know in whom we have believed. He ascended in the clouds to heaven, and the angels who stood by his apostles as they gazed up after him into heaven, assured them that he should so come again in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven. He shall come as he went, *in the clouds*, and yet not altogether as he went, for but few of the human race witnessed his departure; and though crowds of angels attended him, but few of them were visible to human eyes. But not so shall he come. *The Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*, Matt. xxiv. 30. *He shall come in the glory of his father, with the angels*, Matt. xvi. 27. *Behold he cometh with clouds: and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*, Rev. i. 7.

The solemnity and sublimity of that coming, I shall not attempt to describe; but as an ambassador of him, who we believe *shall come to be our judge*, I exhort you to be in readiness for his coming. *Let your loins be girded about and your lamps burning, and ye yourselves, like unto men that wait for their Lord*, Luke xii. 35, 36. God grant that when he comes we may not be forced to cry unto the rocks and the mountains to fall on us, and cover us from his presence; but rather may look up, and welcome his coming with joy, knowing that our redemption draweth nigh.

Macao, May 28, 1843.

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SERMON V.

INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT.

I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.—JOHN xvi. 7.

THERE was a touching scene exhibited in an upper room at Jerusalem, when these words were uttered, and the painter's imagination and skill has been called into exercise more than once to depict it. Let us for a moment exchange places with the disciples, and imagine their thoughts and feelings. They had now been living with the Saviour for three full years, and shared his lot in every variety of circumstances. They had followed him in all his wanderings, they had been hungry and thirsty with him. When wearied, they had sat at his feet, when refreshed, they had walked again at his side. They had seen his miracles. They had marked the glow of intelligence and joy diffused over the face of the blind, when the light of day first shone upon their hitherto darkened sight; they had observed how the dumb praised him, and those who had been deaf listened to his gracious words. They had seen the lepers approach him without fear, and the lame follow him with unfaltering steps. They had witnessed the joy of the desolate widow, as she bent over her only son restored to life by him. They had themselves experienced his power. He had fed them in the desert, and saved them when the tempest had threatened to swallow them up. They had followed him through evil and through good report, trusting that he should redeem Israel. They had seen him reviled by the wicked, and mocked by the scribes and pharisees, till they felt ready to call for the fire of heaven to consume their opposers. They had seen many turning back, and walking no more with them, while they themselves, knowing that he had the words of life, still clave to him. They had been with him in the holy mountain, and had

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seen him when his face did shine. They had heard the voice which proclaimed from heaven, *This is my beloved Son.* They had but lately accompanied him in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; they had heard the multitude shout Hosannah! and hoped that now should be the end of all sufferings, and the consummation of all their hopes.

But, strangely enough, after all this, they heard him exclaim, even in a public assembly, *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour,* John xii. 27. In private, they marked that he became more solemn and sad than before. The pale and pensive face of the man of sorrows, is now more deeply furrowed by grief. Mysterious influences weigh down his spirits,—a strange conflict is evidently going on within his bosom, and they are awed to silence by a sympathy which they feel, but cannot comprehend. The paschal supper follows, and then that scene of unequalled and sublime condescension, *when Jesus, knowing that he came from God, and went to God, riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself, and poured water into a basin, and washed his disciples' feet, and wiped them with the towel wherewith he was girded,* John xiii. 3–5. After this, they heard that startling declaration, *One of you shall betray me,* which seems to have been made at the very time they were observing the supper, which he appointed to be a lasting memorial of his death. He sees the sorrows that fill their hearts, and, ever mindful of others' sufferings, even in the midst of his own, he consoles them with the words, *Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Again he tells them he must depart, and soon they shall see his face no more. With counsels, and warnings, and advice, and the sweetest strains of consolation, and the kindest words of infinite affection, he occupies the passing moments. Though away from them, he would not leave them comfortless. He would still be with them, to watch over, and to protect, and to keep them. It was the farewell address of a love stronger than death, and we may easily conceive how his words would thrill through the hearts of the disciples. But still they were sorrowful at heart. How could it be good for them, that he should leave them, and be seen no more? His instructive parables,—his wonderful works,—his kindness, and forbearance, and compassion, how could they live without these? One and all they declare, they would *rather die than leave him,* though, alas! they knew not so well as he did, the fickleness and

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feebleness of their affection for him. With great condescension and kindness, he shows that his departure was not a thing to be grieved at; that, on the contrary, it was a necessary part of his great plan for saving the world, and that it was indispensable, in order to fit them for the parts they had to perform. *I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* It is a remarkable passage, solemnly and affectionately introduced, and worthy of special notice. Who is this *Comforter?* and what is the work he performs, which makes his coming so important and desirable?

The Comforter is the Holy Ghost, otherwise called the *Spirit of truth*, and the *Spirit of Christ*, the third person of the glorious Trinity, equal with the Father and the Son. He was known to the ancients, for in the record of creation we are told that *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*, Gen. i. 2. His person and character must have been often a subject of earnest inquiry to those who expected the coming of Christ, for he is most distinctly spoken of in the Old Testament, in reference to that coming. But the full revelation of his character is found only in the New Testament, and especially in this last discourse of Christ. But everywhere in the New Testament he is spoken of in terms of the highest honor. The names and titles of God are given to him, and he is described as exercising divine attributes, acquainted with every secret thought, Rom. viii. 26, *searching all things, even the deep things of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. He is called the Spirit of Christ, because, in the economy of redemption, *he belongs to Christ.* He was, in a manner, purchased for the church by his death. He is sent forth by Jesus Christ, and the great object of his mission is to testify of Christ. Obtained by Christ's death, he is sent forth by his prayers. When our Saviour ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, he also gave gifts to men; and of all his gifts, the first and the greatest was this, the gift of the Holy Spirit; and oh, what a gift was this! It came down at first, with a fulness, and freeness, and profusion, that astonished even those who had been expecting it, and confounded those who had not. It was on the day of Pentecost. The disciples, in obedience to the command of their ascended Lord, still tarried at Jerusalem, and their prayers rose constantly with one accord for the fulfilment of his promise. Suddenly, there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,—cloven tongues of fire appeared,—

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they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The sensation produced in Jerusalem was astonishing, as well it might be. The remembrance of the crucifixion of Christ had not yet died away, and the hearts of men were not at ease, when they thought of his predictions. When this new wonder was *noised abroad, the multitude speedily gathered together, and were confounded* at what they saw and heard. A few timid Galileans, without influence or authority in the state, without wealth or honor among men, were now seen boldly advocating the cause of him who had been so lately crucified in scorn. Known to all men to be *unlearned and ignorant men*, they were heard speaking strange and difficult languages, with a fluency and accuracy that no human preceptor ever imparted. Known to be men brought up among themselves, and possessing no power that other men did not possess, and distinguished by nothing, except that they had *been with Jesus*, they were now seen working *great and notable miracles*, which none of their enemies dared to deny. Wonderful, too, were the effects produced by their preaching. Eloquence has been defined as "the art of persuasion," but how could these fishermen be eloquent, who had never been taught in the schools? How should they be able to persuade men to embrace the doctrines of the crucified Jesus, when the chief priests and pharisees, the wise and the learned, without exception, opposed him? Yet on the very first day of their preaching, three thousand men were pricked to the heart by their words, and, asking *What shall we do?* were baptized, and added to their number. Nor did the influence stop here. Miracle followed upon miracle, conversion followed after conversion; *daily were added to them such as should be saved. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul*, and no wonder, for one and the self-same Spirit wrought in them all. The influence spread abroad. It began in Jerusalem, but it stopped not there. Persecution began, and the disciples were scattered; but they went everywhere preaching the word, and still, as they preached, men became obedient to the faith. The mongrel Samaritans believed,—a stranger from distant Ethiopia was baptized, and went rejoicing to his own land, where he proclaimed the same truths. The Gentiles were called; Cornelius, and others with him, believed; and, from that moment, the apostles went abroad to all nations. Standing before the wealth of Ephesus, and the luxury of Corinth, and the learning

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of Athens, and the proud power of imperial Rome, they spake of Jesus and the resurrection. Everywhere they were scorned, everywhere they were opposed, everywhere persecuted, yet in every place the invincible power of the Spirit selected and brought to them those that should be saved. It was a time of overturning among the nations; but the Spirit of God moved on in his conquering course, until the name of Christ was proclaimed in the temples of ancient Rome, and the palace of her monarchs acknowledged his sway.

We are sometimes so dazzled by the splendor of the first manifestation of the Spirit as to be incapable of attending to the less brilliant tokens of his presence in our own times. Indeed there are those among nominal Christians in our day, of whom it may be said, as of the disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus, they *have not so much as heard whether there be an Holy Ghost*, Acts xix. 2. But there is an Holy Ghost. There are influences of the Spirit now diffused, and now felt, among the churches of Christ, and till time shall end those influences shall be diffused, and be felt. It was an express promise of our Saviour, that the Comforter *should abide with his people forever*, John xiv. 16. It is the distinguishing character of the people of Christ, that the *Spirit of Christ dwells in them*, Rom. viii. 9; and of the church of Christ, that it is *a spiritual house offering up spiritual sacrifices unto God*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. I pray your attention for a few minutes longer, while we consider some of the works of the Spirit, as wrought in our times, and as they must be wrought in our own hearts, if we wish ever to see the face of our God in peace.

One of the names given by the Saviour to the Comforter who came to supply the wants of his own bodily presence, is *the Spirit of truth*, John xv. 26. It is an expressive and appropriate name, for he comes to enlighten men, of whom it is most truly said, that naturally we walk in a vain show, and follow after shadows, and falsehoods. Mortifying as the truth is, it is yet incontestable, that we are ignorant of God and his true character,—of the real nature of sin, of our own condition, and of the way of salvation. We think ourselves wise, and that we know all these things, but it is not so, for *the natural man receiveth not the things of God*. We are wise for this world, but not for the next; and therefore these things *are foolishness unto us*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. We may even be acquainted with the letter of the word of God, but

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its real import is hidden from us, till the Spirit of truth has opened our eyes; for *the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Now the object of the Spirit is to remove this blindness, and *to lead into all truth.* Hence he is sent to *convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come*, John xvi. 8. The knowledge of sin, of the sinfulness of our own hearts, though a deeply painful and most humbling knowledge, is yet one of the first importance. No disease that affects the whole constitution can ever be removed, unless its real nature be shown, and its sores probed even to the bottom. The Spirit of Christ performs this painful process by showing the true nature of sin, and its odiousness, as committed against so glorious a being as our God. He takes the soul of man, and drawing off his thoughts from surrounding objects, sets before him in long and terrible array, the sins of his youth, and of his more matured years. He leads him to the unerring standard of God's word, which requires perfect holiness, and shows how every thought has been turned aside. He arms conscience with her native power, and bringing the sinner into the presence of God's perfect justice, bids him consider faithfully who he is, and what he has done, and asks, what retribution awaits conduct such as his has been? The differences in men's natural constitution and temperament will greatly modify their feelings at such a time as this; but there is no man who has been wrought upon by the Spirit of God, faithfully to ask himself these questions, who does not tremble at the view of himself thus obtained, and cry out with the Philippian jailer, *What must I do to be saved?* It is a dreadful thing to stand, as men are sometimes brought to stand in the full light of the Spirit of truth, as it shines upon their iniquities, and reveals the ineffable justice of God. *It is a fearful thing thus to fall into the hands of the living God.* But how shall we escape the sword of his justice? How shall we flee from the wrath to come? How shall these souls that are dead in sin, be made alive to God? *Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live*, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. The Spirit of Christ must answer these questions, and it is his work to do it. There is a way of escape, and Christ is that way. *No man cometh to the Father but by him.* Would you find that way and walk therein? Then seek the Spirit's influence, *for it is the Spirit who testifies of Christ and leads men unto him*, John xiv. 26; xv. 26;

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xvi. 14, 15. It is his great object to show the character of Christ, and why he suffered; to set forth the efficacy of his death, and the sufficiency of his salvation. When the serpent-bitten Israelites were perishing in the wilderness, Moses erected a brazen serpent on a pole, and bade them look and live. The skill of the painter has represented that scene, when friends brought their friends, and a mother her child, and turned its dying gaze to the wonder-working sign. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life,* John iii. 14. The Spirit of Christ here performs for us the office that no friend, no tender mother even, can perform. He brings the crucified one before our eyes, and bids us look and live. Do you smile at this, and say, *How can these things be?* The age of miracles has passed. In what way then does this mysterious Spirit perform his operations? I answer, He works by means; and though the age of miracles be passed, that of supernatural influences has not. A sermon, a letter from a pious friend, a remarkable providence of God, an open bible. These are some of the means; and his influences accompanying them work upon the heart, sometimes gently and sometimes powerfully, but in ways that we cannot explain. Have you never felt them? Has an old truth never darted upon your mind, with a vividness and force that startled you, as though it were a new revelation? Have you not felt yourselves at times impelled to the consideration of serious things? Have you not wished at times that you knew what shall befall you when you shall enter the untried realities of the other world, to which we so rapidly hasten?

"Hath a voice within
Ne'er whispered to thy secret soul,
Urged thee to leave the ways of sin,
And yield thy heart to God's control?

Sinner, it was a heavenly voice,
It was the Spirit's gracious call,
It bade thee make the better choice,
And haste to seek in Christ thine all."

These influences of the Spirit are to be carefully improved. There is a wonderful depth of meaning in the words of our Lord, *The wind bloweth where it listeth—so is every one that is born of the Spirit,* John iii. 8. Learn a lesson from the sailor. The winds

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he encounters are not always favorable, but he knows that without the wind his voyage will never be made. It is his object, therefore, to seek those regions where the most favorable breezes blow, and he is anxious to improve the slightest puff of air. Sail after sail is lifted to the sky, and spread to the breeze. Every change in the force and direction of the wind is carefully noted, and the corresponding changes made in the canvass of his vessel, day by day, and night by night, with untiring perseverance he observeth the winds and regardeth the clouds. And is he not wise to do so? Would you not blame him if he pursued any other course? Precisely alike is our situation, the same as his is our duty. We are sailing over the sea of life; unknown currents are carrying us among unseen dangers, and the Spirit's influences are the only breezes that can waft us to our port in heaven. Watch then as the sailor watches, and earnestly pray for those influences, and you shall obtain them. Where is the dead sea, that is never ruffled by the breeze? Where is the man who has never felt the stirrings of the Spirit? But neglect those influences, misimprove those gracious impressions, which every man who has heard of Christ has felt, and who can you blame if the currents sweep you on the shoals, and you make shipwreck of your souls forever?

I know of no part of the Scriptures which contain such important and delightful truths, as those that speak of the Holy Spirit, and his efforts to turn men unto God. But there are no truths guarded by such awful sanctions as these; for those same scriptures tell us, that though the Spirit suffereth long and is kind, yet he will not always wait. They speak of grieving the Spirit, of quenching the Spirit. They speak of the fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation in the breasts of those who have rejected his offers of mercy. It is a melancholy thing to see a blasted tree in the greenwood; or a becalmed ship at sea drifting on the rocks, when but a few miles off, the winds are careering in their playful courses. But more melancholy and sad is the condition of him, of whom God has said, *He is joined to his idols, let him alone,* Hos. iv. 17. Yet such there are, for the *Spirit of God will not always strive,* and the sin against the Holy Spirit is the sin that will not be forgiven.

The Holy Spirit is the author of Regeneration. Hence it was that our Saviour said with such solemnity to Nicodemus, *Verily,*

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verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John iii. 5.

The Spirit does not leave believers when he has led them to Christ. He dwells in them as an holy temple to the Lord, and abides with them forever. It is his to form every virtue in the heart, and cherish every emotion of good. It is his to mortify sin, and to strengthen against temptation. It is his to strengthen us, helping our infirmities, and enabling us in prayer to plead for the things we need. *The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26.

The influences of the Spirit in the heart, and the fruits of the Spirit in the life, constitute the great distinction between the men of God and the men of the world; for while the latter go on adding sin to sin, the former are known by the fruits of the Spirit in their lives, which are love, joy, peace, goodness and faith.

The doctrines respecting the Spirit of God, are both important and mysterious. Those who are proud of their own powers, and will receive nothing which they cannot comprehend, despise them as mere fantasies. But the Bible is full of mysteries. Everything around us is full of mysteries. Man is a mystery to himself. Is it then unlikely that the plan of our salvation should contain revelations that our own reason would never have discovered? No, my hearers; when we have searched all the heights and fathomed all the depths of the created universe,—when we have walked in search of the depths, and the gates of death have been opened to us, and all these hidden things been revealed to us, then we may complain that we cannot comprehend all that is said concerning that *Spirit who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. In the mean time, it is ours, with holy reverence, to obey his influences, and to admit him into our hearts. It is our part to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; knowing that if *any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9.

Macao, June 4, 1843.

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SERMON VI.

JACOB'S PRAYER.

And Jacob said, Oh God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.—GENESIS xxxii. 9–12.

THE life of the patriarch Jacob was a life of much affliction and sorrow. At the age of more than six score years, when he stood before Pharaoh, he said, *The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, Gen. xlix. 7. The causes of his afflictions were various, but that which chiefly distressed him, and for the longest period made him an exile from his father's house, was his contention with Esau his brother. It is a melancholy thing that in this world, our greatest sorrows often arise where we naturally expect the greatest happiness. Thus Jacob found that *a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are like the bars of a castle*, Prov. xviii. 19.

After spending twenty, or, as many with great reason, suppose forty years, away from his father's house, Jacob received a divine command to return to his own country. It does not appear that he had received any intimation of his brother's feelings towards him, during their long separation, and the command that bade him return did not inform him what reception he should meet from the injured and revengeful Esau. Yet he had various circumstances to encourage him. The divine command itself was amply sufficient. Added to this he was cheered by the appearance of two bands of angels, sent to guard him on his way, and

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to assure him of the divine protection. Yet as he drew near the end of his journey, fears began to arise and distract his mind. He knew that he had injured his brother; he knew his violent disposition; and knew too, that if Esau still retained his anger, it was in vain for him, encumbered with his family and flocks, to think of escaping from him. The messengers that he sent *to find grace in his sight*, brought back an answer by no means calculated to allay his fears. *We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.* The purpose of Esau in coming with such a host, is not stated, but the probability is, that he came to execute his long-cherished purpose, *even to slay his brother Jacob*, Gen. xxvii. 41. So at least Jacob thought, and as may well be supposed, he was *greatly afraid and distressed.* For a while he seems almost to have forgotten the divine command and promises, and the guardian host, which though invisible still surrounded him, (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) He had toiled long in a foreign land, *in the day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night, and sleep departed from his eyes,* Gen. xxxi. 40. He was now returning to spend, as he hoped, the evening of his days in peace, with his flocks and his wealth, his children and his friends, in the land of promise. But before he had even entered that desired land, or crossed the Jordan that separated it from the profane world around, he found himself in danger of losing all and life itself, from the hands of a brother. With no ordinary experience, even in his life of frequent reverses, he took every precaution to avert at least a part of the threatened danger; and dividing *the people that were with him, and his flocks, and herds, and camels, into two bands, he said, If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.* This was all the preparation he could make, but it was not all that he could do; and alarmed though he was, he looked up to God, and gave utterance to his feelings in a prayer, which in appropriateness, simplicity, fervor, and excellence, is equalled only among the prayers of the Bible.

To us, who are as much called upon as ever the ancient patriarchs were to address ourselves to God in prayer, it cannot but be interesting to know what words they used in their addresses to the throne of grace, and with what arguments they enforced their supplications, and the prayer before us is full of instruction on both these points. Jacob commenced his prayer in a manner which, while it expressed strong confidence in God,

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combined also some of the strongest reasons that could be urged why God should hearken to him, and grant his request. He did not appear before him as one who had had no previous communications with him. The suppliant was well known to the Almighty, as his fathers were before him. *Oh God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac.* It is not an unmeaning form of words that is used, when God is called the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. He is also the God of all men, but he is never called the God of Cyrus, or of Rome, as he is called the God of Abraham, and the God of Israel. He is in a peculiar manner their God, for he formed a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, promising to them all needed earthly blessings, and, above all, the gift of his own Son, Jesus Christ. This covenant, and every blessing connected with it, is referred to every time that God is addressed as the God of Abraham, and it was because Jacob trusted in that covenant, that he thus calls upon God. He pleads his covenant relation with him, as the descendants of those to whom special promises had been made, as a reason why he should be delivered, in this his time of distress. He had also another reason for hoping for deliverance. He had not needlessly run into danger. He had not left the path of duty, but was now acting in obedience to an express command of God. Might he not, therefore, expect that God would put forth his hand and protect him? It is not the custom of God to forsake his people in difficulties, when those difficulties come upon them in the way of obedience to his injunctions. Jacob had been for many years a stranger sojourning in a strange land, but though he *sore longed after his father's home*, yet he would not take a step thitherward, till assured it was agreeable to God's will that he should do so. That will was finally intimated to him, and in obedience to it he acted. While thus acting, these difficulties came upon him, but he comforted himself by saying, it was not himself, *but the Lord, which said unto him, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred.* And besides the encouragement he derived from his covenant relation to God, and the consciousness of being in the path of duty, he was farther sustained by having received a special promise of protection. Had God merely commanded him to go, it would have been a sufficient warrant to expect protection, but God had also said unto him, *And I will deal well with thee.* Stronger grounds of encouragement, he could not desire; more explicit assurances of good, he could not need. These grounds of encour-

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agement, be it observed, were not in himself, but in God, and it was well for him that he had such grounds for encouragement, and such assurances, on which to rest his faith; for in himself he felt that he had no title to the favor of God, and no claim on his mercy. The creature of his bounty, and fed by his hand, he could see that he had still grievously erred in many points, and gone astray, while he had done nothing, and could do nothing, that should make God a debtor to himself. He could not but feel, as he looked back, that he had sinned greatly in deceiving his father, and imposing upon him by false pretences; and that Esau had just cause of complaint against him, for supplanting him of his birthright, and defrauding him of his expected blessing. It was, therefore, with deep humility and contrition that he now confessed himself *unworthy of the least of all God's mercies, and his truth.* How different was his language and his spirit from that of his proud descendant, the pharisee, who boldly stood up in the temple to demand the favor of God, as the simple debt of justice due to his good deeds! But true piety is ever deeply humbled before God, and Abraham, and David, and Job, as well as Jacob, always abased themselves when they spake unto God, and confessed themselves undeserving of his mercies.

Jacob, amidst all his fears and confessions of guilt, was not unmindful of the mercies he had received from God, and he refers to them in his prayer, partly that he may express his thankfulness for them, and partly that he may encourage himself with the hope of other mercies from God. Had the Lord so highly favored him in times past, and will he now desert him? Surely not. True, he was afraid, for danger was very near. True, he was unworthy, for he had been a great offender; but still he could not forget how the mercy of God had ever led him along, and how his truth and faithfulness had still sustained him. It is wonderful how soon the memory will run over all the events of a long lifetime, and place them in one vivid picture before the mind. Space and time are nothing to the living principle within us; and in scarcely more time than it required to speak the words, had Jacob recalled his feelings, when, solitary and alone, he crossed the Jordan. He thought of his sojourning in the land of Mesopotamia, and how there from a small one, he had become a strong nation; and he is now returning, rich in all kinds of possessions, to the land of his birth. In all that time the goodness of the Lord had been great to him, and he cannot but speak

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of *all the mercy and truth he had showed to his servant, for with my staff I passed over Jordan, and now I am become two bands.* Thus the remembrance of past mercies encouraged him to hope for mercies yet to come.

The prayer itself is a remarkable one. He prays for deliverance from the hand not of a sworn and hereditary enemy, but from the hand of his own brother. *Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.* The expression, *to smite the mother with the children*, was a common one to denote the extreme of cruelty and rage. The comparison seems to be taken from those who robbed bird's-nests, taking away both the mother and the young, and leaving the nest utterly desolate, and it shows well how greatly Jacob feared his brother. Sin has brought strange things into the world. It has brought confusion and contention into the abodes of order and harmony, and armed man against his brother. It has obliged the weak to lift up their voices to God, who ruleth over all, for protection from those very persons who ought to have been their surest defence.

The prayer of Jacob was short, as the most of those recorded in the Scriptures are. It needs not many words, nor vain repetitions, to make known our wants unto God, for his ear is ever open to hear, and his heart ever ready to compassionate those in any distress. It was also to the point, for Jacob knew what he wanted, when he made his prayer unto God; and it was hearty and sincere, for he felt his need of Divine assistance. Though he prayed for deliverance from the hand of Esau, who sought his life, his prayer breathes no unkind spirit towards him. He still calls him *his brother.*

But when a man is in earnest in urging any petition, either to man or to God, he will not rest satisfied with the bare presentation of his request. He will also urge it by the force of every argument in his power. His whole prayer is a continued series of arguments with God. Before he gave utterance to his petition, he addresses him as his covenant God, and pleads that he was directly commanded to put himself in his present dangerous position. He urges the special promise of favor he had received, and draws an argument also from the past mercies of God, and even from his own present fears. All these he spreads before God. All these he pleads along with his petition. But he has still another argument to plead. In the gracious intercourse of

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God with his fathers, it had been promised to Abraham and Isaac, that they should be greatly increased and multiplied, and that in their seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. This promise had been repeated to Jacob, many years before the present time, when he was fleeing without a companion from the face of Esau. Should his brother now be permitted to wreak his vengeance upon him, and smite the mother with the children, where would be the faithfulness of God? or how could his purposes be accomplished, in making of the seed of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, a great nation?

But we shall very improperly limit the force of the promise, if we confine it to the mere personal descendants, and temporal interests of the race of the patriarchs. Its main reference was to Christ, and the salvation he was to procure; for he was to be born from among the descendants of Jacob, and in him were all the nations of the earth to be blessed. It was this, therefore, which Jacob had in mind, when he pleaded with God: *Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.* His prayer was, therefore, really a prayer in the name of Christ, and, using such an argument with God, it could not but prevail. He obtained, therefore, that which he prayed for, and when he met his brother, the lion was changed into a lamb. *And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept,* Gen. xxxiii. 4.

It is a sublime thing to pray. Even on earth, when a subject is favored with an audience with his monarch, he comes before him with reverence; he carefully prepares himself, that no remark he makes may prove displeasing to his superior; and he earnestly expects to receive some benefit from him. If such feelings possess our minds, even in our dealings with our fellow-creatures, and on matters of merely temporal interest, how much more should our hearts be filled with reverence, in the presence of the Holy Majesty of heaven, when our dealings with him concern our soul's eternal well-being. It is true he shows great grace in condescending to hear us, and we may always approach him with confidence; but beware lest that confidence degenerate into rashness or familiarity. *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore, let thy words be few,* Ecc. v. 2.

Study, therefore, the prayers of such men as Jacob, and

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David of old, for they are complete and copious formulas for our direction. The man whose heart is deeply imbued with reverence to God, and with a due sense of his own sinfulness, will reverently worship his Creator, and humbly confess his own offences. Filled with gratitude for past favors, he will acknowledge his dependence upon God for them all, and will pray for a continuation of the same. His petitions will not be mere lip service. He will be anxious to receive what he asks for, and while he prays with submission to the will of God, it will yet be with earnest cries; nor will he fail to bring arguments to plead with his Maker. Whatever other arguments he presents, he will not fail to plead in the name of Christ, and so doing, he shall be certain of receiving his requests, if they be such as shall be good for him to receive. *Hitherto*, said our Saviour, in his last address to his disciples, *ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joys may be full*, John xvi. 24.

Among all the evidences of the possession of true religion in the heart, few are better than the habit of humble, fervent, persevering prayer. Our spiritual life is so dependent upon supplies of grace from above, and on constant intercourse with our Maker, that a prayerless Christian is a solecism in terms, and an impossibility in fact. The first evidence of being a child of God is given, when it is said, as it was said concerning the persecuting Paul of old, *Behold, he prayeth;* and the hypocrite's character is pointed out, when it is said, *Will he always call upon God?* Job xxvii. 10. By prayer, we derive every blessing from above. The atmosphere we breathe is unfavorable to the growth of religion, and it is only by prayer we can receive those supplies that are essential to our spiritual well-being.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gate of death,
He enters heaven by prayer."

Yet it is a duty and privilege sadly neglected; for it is not enough merely to say, Lord, Lord, or to repeat a form of words, while the heart goeth after vanities. True prayer is a spiritual thing, and requires a spiritual frame of mind to offer it aright, and God will accept of the broken prayer, and the half-suppressed sigh of the contrite heart, when he would turn away from the polished speech and well-chosen petition of the self-confident, unhumbled pharisee.

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Fellow-Christian! what is the character of your prayers? You may find a good test of your growth in grace and Christian standing, simply in the character of your prayers. In the prayer of Jacob, of which a hasty review has been made, you see that everything is to the point, that there is no wandering, no pointless, uncertain petitions, no repetitions. He came to the throne of grace, and he had an errand there. On what errand do you come? Or do you come, merely because it is a matter of course? He had a petition and a request to offer. What is your petition and your request? He came, desiring an answer. Do you desire an answer to your prayers? He came with his mouth filled with arguments. The covenant of God, a command to himself, a special promise, a general promise, that included the coming of a Saviour,—all these were his arguments. Do you bring arguments? do you plead promises in prayer? If you read the Bible carefully, and pondered over it, you would find both subjects enough to pray about, and promises and arguments with which to fill your prayers. It is careless reading of the Scriptures, that is one cause of your barrenness and coldness in prayer.

But further. Jacob's prayer had a full confession of unworthiness connected with it, and also a thankful acknowledgment of mercies received. These are also parts of prayer. "Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." Do your prayers contain these essential parts? I do not ask, have they this form? It is most likely they have,—but do these parts of your prayers come from your hearts? My brethren, if you would prosper, and be accepted in your prayers, I would advise you to study and imitate the prayer of Jacob, particularly in these five things:—

1. Have an object when you come.
2. Plead for it earnestly, with all due arguments.
3. Confess your own unworthiness.
4. Acknowledge the mercy of God, which has so long supplied you.
5. And, lastly, let all things be done in the name of Jesus Christ.

Macao, June 18, 1843.

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SERMON VII.

PLANTS OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. PSALM xcii. 13.

THE fertility of oriental climates produces many and splendid objects to gratify the eye, and gives rise to equal splendor in imagery and comparison. The Bible is an Eastern book, and its poetry like other eastern poetry, breathes the fragrance of an atmosphere of spices. Every object of beauty is drawn into the service of religion, and one familiar with its pages sees almost nothing around him that is not sanctified by its frequent allusions and comparisons. The sentiment of our text is founded on a comparison drawn from the forest trees of the land of Palestine. The preceding verse had compared the righteous to the stately and towering palm, with its nourishing fruit, and to the cedar of Lebanon with its spreading shade, and its undying greenness. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like the cedars in Lebanon.* Continuing his comparison, the Psalmist declares, *Those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

It is proposed to inquire into the meaning of the expression, *planted in the house of the Lord*, and to show the connection between such planting and *flourishing in the courts of God.*

The church of God is oftentimes compared to a garden, filled with every variety of flower and plant and tree. Yet as in all our gardens, weeds infest the ground, and thorns and thistles and noxious plants usurp the places reserved for useful and ornamental trees,—so it is in the garden of God. It is not every plant, that makes a fair show, which has a right to stand there. There may even be branches of the useful vines, which bearing no fruit, shall be taken away, John xv. 2, and of those which are utterly

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useless, the stern decree has gone forth, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* It becomes therefore a matter of the utmost moment to discern between the bad and the good; to distinguish between the *Trees of righteousness, the branch of his planting,* and those which bearing only wild and noxious fruits, are *rejected and nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned,* Heb. vi. 8.

The planting here spoken of is evidently something more than mere external form. It certainly implies that that which is planted possesses a living principle within, which grows and flourishes when once its roots are placed in the appropriate soil. This planting, therefore, in the house of the Lord—or, divesting the expression of its figurative dress—this numbering of any one in the church, and among the people of God, does not consist in external rites and ordinances alone. That baptism is a solemn and important and most useful ordinance, is admitted by all, who pay any respect to the institutions of our God; but that baptism alone, or the Lord's Supper alone, or both of them together, can save the soul, is an error of the most dangerous kind, and worthy of the cunning and malice of the god of this world who invented it. *Baptism is not regeneration.* If the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, shall the sprinkling of a little water on the outward body, wash away the stains of the unseen soul? Did not Simon Magus, who believed and was baptized, still remain *in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity?* Did not Judas rise from the Lord's table to go to his own place, with the fearful declaration sounding after him, *good were it for that man, if he had never been born,* Mark xiv. 21. Thousands there are, you may have known such, who have been baptized in the name of Christ, and yet by their conduct shame the very heathen themselves. Shall their baptism save them? The confessions of faith of all the reformed churches are on this point, plain and explicit. Thus in the twenty-seventh of the articles of religion of the Church of England, it is expressly called,—not regeneration,—but "a sign of regeneration or the new birth, whereby, as by an instrument they that receive baptism rightly, are grafted into the church." Such is its true nature. It is merely an instrument, and if rightly used, is of excellent service. But if there be nothing but the instrument,—if a man be merely received into the visible church by this outward ordinance,—if there be no root, and living principle,—and if that living principle do not exert itself and grow,—then he is only a dry stick in the house of God.

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He is not planted there. The blast shall prostrate him to the ground, and he shall be gathered and cast forth with others, to become fuel for the fire. Neither by this planting in the house of the Lord are we to understand, a mere profession of religion, even though it be joined to external morality, and a blameless deportment. It is not enough merely to read a prayer or two, and perhaps glance at the Bible for a short time every day. It is not enough to be a regular attendant at the house of God, and while there to give a respectful hearing to the messages delivered by his servants. It is not enough to obey all human laws, and act with justice and kindness towards one's neighbors. All this is well and commendable. It is essential to the well-being of society, and the happiness of the social circle; and it is especially important as leading to better things. But I repeat it, all this is not enough. You may have all this, and perish forever. You are not satisfied when you plant a fruit tree in your garden, and come to it year after year seeking fruit, if you find it standing tall and erect in the place where you planted it, but fruitless. It may not disfigure the scene, but why these leaves and blossoms, if the solid reward of the labor bestowed upon it be wanting? *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* And is a mere externally blameless deportment all that God expects, when himself has told us, *The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith*, Gal. v. 22. Will he be satisfied with mere outward show, the leaves and flowers of lip service, who looks at the inward man, and values the sighing of the contrite heart, and the praise of the grateful soul, more than gold or gems?

Neither will it be deemed sufficient, if one, in addition to an admission to the church by baptism, and a generally correct deportment, adds also, a zeal for external ceremonies, and a polemic eagerness for discussion on disputed points in religion. There may be much of this where there is no real interest in religion. The Pharisees were extremely eager to defend the religion they professed, and they would compass sea and land to make one proselyte. But this did not secure for them the approbation of our Saviour. On the contrary, he pronounced the spirit that actuated them to be the spirit of this world, and not of God, and declared concering them, *Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*, Matt. xv. 13.

We are not therefore to judge by mere external appearances. Many look fair and flourishing for a time, who do not continue

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long. *When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed forever*, Ps. xcii. 7. It is a terrible description that is given of such, by the apostle Jude,—and a terrible fate awaits them. *They are trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit twice dead, plucked up by the roots, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever*, Jude 12, 13.

By those planted in the house of the Lord, we are to understand such as not only enjoy the ordinances of religion, and the care of the divine husbandman, but such as show also, that they have a principle of spiritual life to be cared for, and bring forth fruit answerable to the care bestowed upon them. In other words, they are living, growing, and active Christians; drawing their spiritual life from above, and constantly tending thitherward, as the trees stretch out their arms towards heaven.

That anything planted should grow and flourish with vigor, it must have its roots deeply implanted in appropriate soil; it must be watered by frequent showers of heaven; it must be protected from the cold blasts and nipping frosts of winter as well as from the sun's too scorching rays. It will need constant care and attention; and its luxuriance and waywardness, must be trimmed and restrained by the use of the pruning knife. If it be a good tree it will be constantly growing; while its roots strike deeper into the earth, its branches will rise higher towards heaven; its trunk will become more solid, it will yield less to the blasts that sweep around it; and its plentiful fruit will satisfy the expectation of him who watched and cherished it with so much care. It will continue vigorous and healthy, even in old age, and the children of him who reared its first shoots, will rejoice in its wide-spreading shade.

Such, emphatically, is the Christian. He is planted in the house of the Lord; for the church is the garden of God, and the plants that are really planted there, are objects of the special care of their divine master and cultivator. It is a spiritual planting we speak of, such as the apostle describes when he says, *Being planted in the likeness of Christ's death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection*, Rom. vi. 5. That is, those who are really members of the church of God, are such as are united to Christ by a living faith, and they thus become one with him. They draw their spiritual life from the merits of his death, and expect in virtue of his resurrection to be raised again from the dead, and made to partake of all spiritual blessings. It is not a mere pro-

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fession of union that they make, for as the same apostle declares, they are *rooted and grounded in the love of God*—because in his love they live. This is the soil from which they derive their nourishment and strength. It is this which supplies every want, which sustains them when languishing, and causes them vigorously to increase. Neither is it by any man's own merits or good desert that he is placed in the garden of the Lord, and there enabled to grow. This is forcibly expressed by the apostle Paul in his comparison of the church to an olive-tree, from which some of the branches were broken off, and others from a wild olive-tree grafted in, to partake of the root and fatness of the olive. *Boast not thyself against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree*, Rom. xi. 18, 24.

The care which God employs in selecting and planting the trees of righteousness in his garden, is exercised over them, as long as they remain in his house below. The church is but a nursery in which they are to remain for a season, until they be ready for removal and transplanting, in a more genial clime. While here, they enjoy his special care and attention. His word comes down *like the rain from heaven*, Is. lv. 10, for their good, while his Spirit diffuses his silent influences, like the precious dews of the night, over their souls. The hot blasts of Satan's temptations assail them at times, or the world's chilling influences creep over them, yet he is ever near to observe them, and to shield them from harm if shelter be needed. Sorrows and afflictions often come upon the people of God, and sore bereavements strip them of many of those things in which they delighted; even as you have seen a tree stripped of its leaves, with its branches broken by the storms that raged around it; but their troubles are all permitted and overruled with a wise reference to their good. For we are like plants that need constant pruning and restraint; and the wise husbandman will apply his sharp knife with vigor, if he see that otherwise his hopes of abundant fruit may be disappointed. Although this is not the permanent station of God's people—although it is certain that he has nobler work for them to do above, yet even here he expects them to serve him. *Herein is my Father glorified*, said our Saviour, *that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples*, John xv. 8. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord must show the effect of

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their superior training, by their vigorous growth and abundant fruit. *I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God*, said David in his early manhood, Ps. lii. 8; and like the palm-tree he still brought forth fruit in old age, 1 Chron. xxix. 1; and like the cedar-tree he was fat and flourishing.

Such is the character of those who are really planted in the house of God below. I am aware that there are those who are said to be planted there, to whom a widely different description belongs. But it is for them to say why they differ from the description he has given of his own people. It is for them to say, when he comes seeking fruit from them, year after year, and still finding none, why they have disappointed his expectations. It is for them to show cause why the axe, which is laid at the root of the trees, should not be applied, and the tree that bringeth not forth good fruit be hewn down and cast into the fire; and woe unto all such as are not ready when he comes to render him their *fruits in their seasons!*

After remaining the appointed time in the house of God below, his people are removed to their eternal homes above. The proper time for such removal is known to the great Husbandman alone. It sometimes seems to us as if the excellent of the earth are removed at seasons, when the vacancy occasioned by their absence can hardly be supplied. But it is not so. *He who has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of men's habitation*, knows best when to reward the faithfulness of his servants. They are taken away, but it is that they may occupy a nobler station nearer to himself. *They that be planted in the house of the Lord on earth, shall flourish in the courts of our God in heaven.* In that region of eternal blessedness they shall flourish forever. There are no chilling blasts, nor scorching droughts, to injure the fair trees of righteousness. The pruning knife is never needed there; and of them it may most truly be said, *Blessed are they! For they shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit,* Jer. xvii. 8. It is one of the peculiar principles of that state of happiness, that it is subject to no vicissitudes, and never comes to an end. *As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands*, Is. lxv. 22.

I have used figurative language freely in explaining this pas-

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sage of holy writ, because it is a passage that calls for such language. But let not the comparisons and analogies adduced cover and conceal the important truths they are intended to make known.

If God's word compares his people to trees planted in the garden, then here is a test by which you may judge of your own character. Are you thus planted in the house of the Lord? And if that same word declares that it is only those who are planted in his house below, that shall flourish in his courts above, then you have, not merely a test of character, but the strongest of all motives to find where you are placed, and to act accordingly.

Observe the character of his people. They are planted in the house of the Lord. The people of God are found in the church of God. It is not the teaching of any human master to which they yield implicit obedience. Much may be learned from men, and by the assistance of men, but God's word is the standard of all right—yea, the sum and the substance of all truth. Let it be your study then to understand that word, for the church is built upon it; nor can you know whether you are in the church if you understand not the obvious declarations of its pages. It has its mysteries, and it has its obscurities; but the parts that are necessary to be understood, are so plain, *that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein*, Is. xxxv. 8.

But observe, it is not enough to be in the church by mere baptism and external participation in its ordinances. You must be *planted* there if you wish to flourish in the courts of God. Your life must be derived from heaven, and sustained from heaven, and your conduct must be answerable to your privileges. It is *fruit* the Master looks for from you. Leaves and blossoms are very beautiful; but the fig-tree that mocked the expectations of the hungry having nothing thereon but leaves only, was cursed and withered away, Matt. xxi. 19. What fruit are you bearing? How much do you glorify our Father in heaven? If he came now seeking fruit from you, should he find any? And if not, what excuse could you offer him? how prove your claim to be considered a *branch of his planting?*

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, Matt. vii. 19, 21.

Macao, June 25, 1843.

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SERMON VIII.

TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.

And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—Luke ix. 57–62.

When Christ came, the secret thoughts of many hearts were revealed. His coming had been anxiously looked for. A general expectation of great things following his advent prevailed, and the whole Jewish nation may be said to have been in the posture of anxious waiting to see what he would accomplish. But his humble parentage and place of abode disheartened many, and his lowly appearance, unattended by trains of courtly followers, disgusted more. It was not long after his public ministry commenced, that the scornful cry was heard, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* and his friends were told with bitter scoffs, that *out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* Yet notwithstanding these disadvantages, as worldly men would call them, his doctrines excited attention, and forced a reluctant assent, even from his bitterest enemies. The splendor of his miracles, and the sublimity and truthfulness of his teachings convinced many. Their consciences responded to his calls, though their will remained in opposition to him. Yet some at least were found to follow, and to serve him. He could have secured many followers, by promises, which as the Son of God he could easily have performed. Had he only concealed the difficulties that attended a profession of faith in his

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name, he would have been attended by crowds of disciples. But he concealed nothing. As Joshua said to the over-forward Israelites, when they declared their readiness to serve the Lord, *Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God: he is a jealous God*, Josh. xxiv. 19. So Christ showed plainly the strict and uncompromising nature of his religion. He held up a crown of life and pointed to eternal joys, as the reward of his faithful servants; but he did not hesitate to show the rough and stormy road that led to that crown, and the martyr's death by which they often entered on that life. No man ever yet entered the Christian church to whom the apostle Paul did not say, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. In like manner our Saviour told all who came unto him, *to count the cost* before they undertook his service; for as he said to his disciples, *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, John xvi. 33. These warnings were repeated as often as new offers of service were made. Thus it came to pass on one occasion, as they went in the way, that a certain person offered to cast in his lot among the disciples of Christ. What induced him to make this offer is not stated. He may have been impressed by the sight of the miracles of Christ. His conscience may have been touched by his solemn words, or the eloquence of him, who spake as never man spake, may have arrested his attention. It appears from the account given by Matthew, that he was a scribe, belonging therefore to the learned class in Judea. It is most probable that he was a person somewhat fond of a life of ease and enjoyment, which at the same time would give opportunities of attending to literary pursuits, and those studies of ethics which were then in vogue in the heathen schools of morality. He seems to have expected peculiar opportunities of gratifying his taste, under the teachings of such a master as Christ; while the thought of want, or exposure to personal inconveniences, in the company of one who could feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes,—or when the storm raged could still it with a word, appears not to have entered his mind. With much confidence therefore, he approaches the Saviour, *Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.* It was a bold promise made, as too many are, under the excitement of the moment, only to be broken when the excitement has worn away. When the Israelites were at the foot of Mount Sinai, with the remembrance of the Red Sea, and of Elim, and of Massah and Meribah, still fresh in their minds, it was easy for them to say, *All that the Lord*

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hath spoken we will do, Exod. xix. 18. But it was not so easy to do as they had said, when water failed them in the desert, and their soul loathed the light bread that sustained them. When Peter was surrounded by his fellow-disciples, and the melting words of Christ's affection still sounded in his ears, it was easy for him to say, *Lord, I will lay down my life for thy sake*, John xiii. 37, but he found it a harder trial than he had expected, when the stern soldiers gathered around him, and a scoffing damsel said, *Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth*, Mark xiv. 67. The scribe had seen the miracles of Christ, when the sick were restored to health, and thousands were fed by his miraculous stores. He had listened to his words, when so many crowded to hear him, that they even trod upon one another, and he thought it would be always so. He thought it would be pleasant to be with such a man, and to follow him in triumphal procession from city to city; but he knew not the toil and self-denial, and the suffering and sorrow of the private life of Christ. He was like a raw recruit, who is willing enough to enlist for the war, but supposes that all can be done in the shade, and amidst delights, without sweat and dust, and beyond the reach of the enemy's arms.

To try his courage, and to open to him the secrets of his heart, Christ told him his own condition in life. It was not such as he had pictured to himself. Though really Lord of all, he was now a stranger in his own dominions, and though a few friends occasionally administered to his wants, yet house or home of his own, he had none. *Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.* And as the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord, those who follow him are not authorized to expect better accommodations. Pause for a moment, at this description. They are Christ's own words, you hear, and the person so destitute is God's own Son! Before all things,—for whom all things were made,—by whose power all things exist, when he came to the earth, and took up his abode among men, the very beasts of the field, and the wandering birds of the air, had better homes than he! Is there not meaning in the apostle's words, when he said, *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; though he was rich, yet, for your sakes, he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might become rich*, 2 Cor. viii. 9. If he has done this much for us, shall we count it hard that he expects his disciples to walk in his footsteps, to drink of the cup of which he drinks, and to be baptized

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with the baptism wherewith he is baptized? Has he not a right to say, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me?* Luke ix. 23. What effect the words of Christ produced upon the scribe, is not stated, nor does it concern us to know. The words themselves are recorded for our careful consideration; and he that will be Christ's disciple, must make up his mind to bear all this, should his Master so require it. He may not see fit to call you to such self-denial; but if he should, you must cheerfully bear it.

Another man was seen, for whom Christ had a work to do. He therefore gives him a special call, *Follow me* He meant to make him a preacher of the gospel. The office of the ministry is of so much importance and solemnity, that no man should undertake it, who has not received a distinct call thereto. A man cannot enter the ministry, as he can the army or the navy, or the profession of law or of medicine. It is a solemn thing to be a messenger of the Lord of hosts, to be an ambassador of Christ, and none but those who have suitable qualifications, and a special appointment, should take this office upon themselves. Ordinarily, it is not difficult to discover whether one is called to the ministry or not; but there are frequently cases in which those who are called to it, hesitate to undertake its duties. A sense of their own unfitness, as in the case of Moses, or an apprehension that they have other and more pressing engagements, deters them from commencing new ones. Thus it was with the person here addressed. There appears to have been no unwillingness to follow Christ, but his aged father was at home, and probably near the end of his life. His assistance might be needed, to pay the last sad rites, and filial piety urged him to remain till his father should no more need his services. *Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.* This was as fair an excuse as could be offered, but the Lord did not consider it sufficient. There were others who had less important callings, and who could easily perform all that was required for his father; but for him, there was a work to do, whose importance admitted of no delay. *Let the dead bury their dead.* Let those whose minds are occupied only with the affairs of this world, who have no proper sense of spiritual things, who are spiritually dead, and have no nobler work to perform, let them attend to earthly matters; *but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.* This is an employment above all others, and must, therefore, take the precedence of all others. It was not

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the object of Christ to depreciate the importance of the social virtues, nor did he at all intimate that the dead should not be decently interred; but he did mean to teach, that, when a man is called to preach the gospel, he must suffer no other engagement to interfere with this. He called Matthew, as he sat at the receipt of custom, and he left all and followed him. He called the sons of Zebedee, as they were with their father, and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. He called for Peter, he called for Nathaniel, he called for Paul, and they obeyed his call, leaving all for him, and exclaiming, *Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel*, 1 Cor. ix. 16. Say not that the sacrifice is too great, or that too much is asked, when this is required. No sacrifice, not even life itself, can be too great, when made for the sake of him, who created us at first, and redeemed us with his own precious blood. It was to the praise of Levi, that the inspired penman wrote concerning him, *He said to his father and to his mother, I have not seen him: neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant*, Deut. xxxiii. 9.

There was still another offer of service made to our Lord, but apparently by one who had not properly considered the nature of the service he was about to undertake. He was willing to follow Christ, but he wished first to arrange matters comfortably in his own house. He wished to go and say farewell to those in his own house, but he does not appear to have intended to break off all connection with the world. It was his desire, so to arrange his family affairs (αποταξασθαι) as to secure a comfortable retreat for himself, if religion should at any time offer less than he now expected from it. His proposal really amounted to a proposition to keep the world, as well as obey Christ, though it did not bear so much openly on its face. *Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home in my house.* He was willing enough to follow Christ, provided he could do it in peace with the world, and did not thereby close the door against his return to his old companions. Such followers Christ did not want. The whole heart, or none at all. The world must be totally renounced, and the kingdom of God first and chiefly sought. *No man, having put his hands to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* He that commences any undertaking, however humble it may be, must give it his undivided attention, if he wishes to succeed. More especially is this true in those things

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that relate to the other world. We *cannot serve God and Mammon.* He that starts to flee from the devoted city of destruction, but turns and looks back, longing again to re-enter its walls, and enjoy its delights, will never escape to the mountain of safety. *Remember Lot's wife.* He that comes to the battle-field, but turns his back when the charge is sounded, may indeed save his life for the time, but the victor's crown will never be his. He that commences the Christian course, but afterwards, for any cause whatsoever, turns back, will find himself totally unfit for the kingdom of God, and his latter end shall be worse than the first.

This account is exceedingly instructive, by reason of its showing us so clearly the terms of discipleship, and the claims of the religion of Christ. The particular circumstances of each person in this account, are not so much the objects of attention, as the view it gives us of the *spirit required* in those who would follow Christ. The circumstances of different men vary, according to the age and country in which they live, and the rank they hold in life; but the spirit and disposition of each member of the church of Christ, must be the same, whatever difference there be in his outward circumstances.

The spirit required in those who would follow Christ, as we may easily gather from the narrative before us, is one that would induce them to give up bodily ease and pleasure, wandering about, as has been done by others—yes, and by the ancestors of some of us—in deserts and mountains, and dwelling in dens and caves of the earth. It is such a spirit as will induce a man to tear himself away from father and mother, from wife and children, and, if need be, to endure the changed affection, and even the hatred, of those he loves best on earth, for the sake of Christ. It is that spirit which will induce a man to look upon the world as perishing dross, and will enable him on occasion to take cheerfully the spoiling of his goods, and to embrace the stake, and gaze upon the flaming fagots, not accepting deliverance, when that deliverance can be obtained only by renouncing the service of the Master, whose cause we have embraced. It may be that none of those who hear me, shall ever be called upon to make such sacrifices, and endure such sufferings as these, for the sake of Christ. And yet, who shall assure you that you shall not? In the life-time of nearly all who hear me, all of these sacrifices have been made for Christ, and even death itself has been endured for his sake. Even now do the native Christians of Madagascar

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wander houseless in the tangled forests, rather than renounce the service of Christ, and I have yet to learn that Satan is not willing again to raise up persecutions in Christian lands, or that there are not men wicked enough to persecute others for conscience' sake, or that God may not see fit again to purify his church by fire and sword, and thus separate the precious from the vile.

But all this is not the hardest that a man may be called to endure, for the sake of Christ. A man may suffer martyrdom itself, with but little of the spirit of a true martyr. It is the daily routine of Christian life and duty, that calls for the sorest warfare, and the most painful sacrifices. Were there only a few strong efforts to be made, the work were easily accomplished. But with steady aim, and with single purpose to persevere, even to the end of life, in a course of self-denial, of mortification of sin, and seeking after holiness—this is no easy work. To walk in the valley of humiliation, after being on the heights of prosperity —this is far harder than mere bodily penances and austerities. To live the secret life of faith, and even to feel and act as a stranger in the earth,—to meet and overcome all of Satan's temptations,—to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy,—to maintain a constant warfare against every sin that rises in the breast,—this is that which calls for more than human strength. No one, who knows his own heart, will ever promise in his own strength to follow Christ whithersoever he goes. But, through Christ strengthening us, it can be done; and the sacrifices the human nature shrinks from, will appear to grace as only light afflictions, enduring for a moment, and not worthy to be compared with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory that is to follow.

The Christian life, therefore, is a life of self-denial. While in these tabernacles, we must walk by faith, and not by sight; like the Israelites who toiled through the desert, in hopes of entering the promised land. But let it not be supposed that the way through the desert is all one of gloom and sorrow. On the contrary, he who cheerfully endures the self-denial, and faithfully performs the duties attending his course, will find incomparably more satisfaction than the votaries of pleasure, or other followers of the world ever enjoy. The Israelites in the wilderness suffered far more from their own sins and follies, than from the self-denials and toils of their route. It was their own murmurings and sins that called down the judgments of God, and brought the plague of serpents among them; while, during their whole course, they

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experienced the daily favor and care of God. Their raiment waxed not old, nor did their foot swell. Manna from heaven supplied their daily bread, and they drank water from the rock, while the pillar of fire and of cloud was their shelter by day, and their light by night. It is thus with the Christian. Follow your Saviour in the path he has marked out for you, and, though often wearied and heavy-laden, it will bring you unto him, and you shall find rest to your souls.

MACAO, July 2, 1843.

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SERMON IX.

WALKING WITH GOD.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, because God took him.—Genesis v. 24.

Enoch, the seventh in direct descent from Adam, was born about A.M. 622. When he was born, Adam, the father of the human race, was yet in his prime, and as far as we know, no man had yet died on the earth, except Abel.

The remembrance of the fall of man and his sorrowful departure from the garden of Eden must still have been fresh in the minds of men. Doubtless Adam related the melancholy story to his descendants, all of whom must have seen him, and had opportunities of personal intercourse with him. Nay, Paradise itself remained. Its high walls were visible to all, and the fiery cherubim and flaming sword still guarded the way to the tree of life, and offered a living and fearful commentary to the warnings and exhortations of Adam to his descendants.

Yet in the very sight and presence of him who had fallen from his state of perfect innocence and purity, and in full view of the living and flaming emblems of God's displeasure against sin, mankind were daily becoming more and more corrupt. Sin and misery had already crept over the world. Ungodliness was rife among men. Every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil continually, and the fair world which during the lifetime of one then alive, had been the abode of holiness and bliss, was already subjected to the empire of Satan, and with but few exceptions men had departed from God. Adam had many sons and daughters, from whom the whole world was peopled; but they all seem to have been ranged under the banners of Cain or of Seth. Of Cain, and all his descendants and followers, we know not that even one was found on the Lord's side. From the descendants of Seth there were several. The church of God was

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formed in his family, and before the flood, as well as after, there has been no time from the creation until the present period, when God has not had a church on earth. It is, however, too evident that many even of Seth's descendants were ungodly men, and that the church of God was but a little flock, while his enemies on earth were numerous and powerful. Already was it necessary in the time of Enoch to denounce the approaching judgments of God. *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold! the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*, Jude 14, 15.

It is needful to bear in mind this almost universal defection from God, in order rightly to appreciate the excellency of Enoch's character, and the power of religion in his heart. He lived in an age with much to discourage him. The wickedness of men was all around him, and their hard speeches which they spake against God, daily sounded in his ears. Yet faithful he stood, and so exemplary was his conduct, so perfectly did he walk with God, that he received special marks of his favor, and was exempted from the ordinary lot of men. *He was not, because God took him.* It may have been while he was preaching to men, and warning them of the judgments of God, that their wrath rose against him, and God, to deliver him from their hands, *translated him that he should not see death*, Heb. xi. 5.

The apostle Paul, in that bright catalogue of holy men, which he gives in Heb. xi. bestows special commendation upon Enoch, *By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God*, Heb. xi. 5.

It is not so easy a matter to walk with God, as is commonly imagined. Were nothing more required, than a mere externally decent deportment, an outward respect for religion, and an attendance upon its outward ordinances, with an occasional participation of some of its more solemn rites, it were all easy enough. But had this been all that is included in the expression to walk with God, the Bible would never have described it, in such terms as *a race, a warfare, a battle, a pilgrimage*, and others expressive of difficulty, of toil, of suffering, of internal conflicts, and of struggling with Satan's temptations.

How can two walk together except they be agreed? Amos iii. 3.

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But naturally what agreement is there between God and man? God is in heaven and we upon earth. God is all-powerful and all-wise, we frail and ignorant. God is the sovereign ruler of all, we creatures and subjects, and worse than all, the slaves of his bitterest enemy. God is all-holy and just. Righteousness is his delight, and he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. Are we not defiled by sin, *from the sole of the foot to the head?* How can two beings so diverse walk together? What can his holiness find in us, but objects of abhorrence? or his justice but objects of wrath? Which of his attributes can delight in man, or make him a friend? Naturally we walk contrary to God, and possessing such a character as he does, he must necessarily walk contrary to us. A change must occur ere God and man can harmoniously meet. But a change cannot occur in the unchangeable Jehovah. His eternal essence and perfect rectitude, do not admit of variableness, nor the least shadow of turning. Heaven and earth shall wax old and be removed like a scroll, while he continues the same. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word never changes. In man alone therefore can the change occur,—and its necessity is strongly set forth by our Saviour, when he said to Nicodemus, *Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* And how great a change it is! It is from darkness to light,—from error to truth,—from sin to holiness. The greatness of the change is expressed by the several comparisons in scripture by which it is represented. In the verse just quoted our Saviour calls it *a new birth.* There is a vast difference between the condition of the unborn infant as it lies in darkness and silence in the womb, and its life, when its ears hear the sound, and its eyes perceive the light of this world.

The change is elsewhere compared to a resurrection from the dead. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins,* Eph. ii. 1. When the prophet was led out to the valley full of bones, and made to pass by them, and beheld them lying scattered, and naked, and broken, and dried,—could he hope that they would ever live again? Was it not mockery when the Lord said to him, *Son of man, can these bones live?* Ezek. xxvii. 3. To man it would seem so, but the answer he gave was wise, *Oh Lord God, thou knowest.* Human power could never make them live, but when the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, then there was a noise and a shaking, and bone came together to his bone, and

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sinews and flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above, and the breath came into them and they lived. Thus, when the power of God is manifested in calling the souls of men back to himself to walk with him, there is a change as wonderful and decided, as when the mouldering skeleton is raised and restored to life again. The change required in order that men may walk with God, is also compared to a new creation, and what is more unlike than nonentity and existence? *If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation*, 2 Cor. v. 17.

These comparisons all express the greatest conceivable change, and they all distinctly inform us that without this change, it is impossible to walk with God. What fellowship hath light with darkness? When one appears, does not the other flee away? In our natural state, we are the servants of sin and Satan, but what concord hath Christ with Belial? No! men must come out from their natural state, and be separate from the sins and ways of the world, ere God will dwell in them, and walk with them, and be their God. The natural world has its antipathies. Oil and water will not unite; nor will the fruits of the torrid zone come to maturity beneath the poles. Is it strange then that holiness and sin should be opposed, or that the love of God should not flourish in a heart preoccupied with the world?

How then do men walk with God? Wherein consists the nature of that mysterious change that fits man for intercourse with his Maker? How is he sustained from day to day in his heavenward course? These are hard questions to answer. Who can tell what life is? You see a plant in its growth—you watch it from the moment its tender shoot first appears above the ground, to the period when it stands displayed in all the freshness and beauty of its bloom, and ripened fruitage; but can you understand the process by which a black and naked seed which lies in the palm of your hand, gives rise to a tree whose fruit supports, and whose shade refreshes the birds of the air and the beasts of the field? You see a playful child, and watch him as he grows up to manhood; but can you explain that principle of life which makes him to differ from the dead body you have seen consigned to the silent grave? If you cannot understand even earthly things, how shall the things of heaven be explained? The principle of spiritual life is as mysterious in its nature as that which sustains the vegetable or the animal world. He alone who possesses it knows what it is; but even he cannot impart the

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knowledge of it to those who possess it not. Talk to a deaf man of sounds, or to a blind man of colors, and what is he the wiser? But though we cannot explain the nature of the life of God in the soul of man, in its hidden and mysterious processes, we can see its effects, we can judge of its causes, and this is all we need to know.

The difference between the Christian and the man of the world is, that the former looks chiefly at those things which are unseen and eternal, while the latter is solely careful for those that are seen, and temporal. The Christian walks by faith. The worldling lives by sight. The secret of Enoch's walking with God, was his faith. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him*, Heb. xi. 56.

The man who thus walks with God by faith has his eyes opened to see spiritual things, especially God's character and his own, and all his actions and course of life correspond with just views of God's attributes.

1. He is filled with a deep sense of the sinfulness of his own heart and life before God. The declarations of the sacred Scriptures in reference to the natural character of man, are inexpressibly painful and humiliating. To be told that in us there is no good thing—to join with David in his confession, *Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*, Ps. li. 5; to be so filled with a sense of sin, as to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes, as Job did, xlii. 6; to see and feel that sin reigns in our mortal bodies, and that the pure eye of God which looks into our most secret thoughts, sees nothing there that is holy; nothing which can deserve his favor;—oh, this is hard. This is the reason why repentance is such bitter work to most men. We like not to think of ourselves, as meanly as the word of God describes us to be, and as enlightened and impartial experience shows we are. We like not to view God's justice and holiness as utterly arrayed against us, and to feel that as long as God remains what he is, we must either change, or perish forever. But this is not all. We might be willing to change, and thus secure the favor of God, could we do it in our own strength, and thus secure to ourselves a part at least of the credit of such a change. But the word of God, and our own experience, which combine to show us the depth of our sin, as distinctly inform us

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that our own strength is not sufficient. They tell us, that *we are dead in trespasses and in sins*, Eph. ii. 1; and can the dead raise themselves? Could Lazarus in his grave have said, I will now arise and go forth, if the Son of God had not stood and called, *Lazarus, come forth?* No. Our own righteousness is very dear unto us. We are loath to give up all dependence upon our own good works. It is hard to renounce all self-dependence, and to trust our guilty souls upon the sovereign mercy of God above. The first question of the convinced sinner always is, *What shall I do to be saved?* With what price shall I purchase my deliverance? Men will stand and hesitate long before they will so humble themselves as to accept of a free pardon. Nay, they will go back and look down into the abysses of the bottomless pit, ere they will consent to enter on that strait and narrow way, which can be entered only by him who comes divested of every earthly load, and casts his naked soul before the Saviour to be clothed upon with his righteousness. No natural man will ever say with the apostle Paul, *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

But when the heart is enlightened by divine grace, we shall thus look upon our own character, and acknowledge our own inability to save ourselves. And is there no other way of escape? Must we lie down in sorrow, because our own right hand cannot deliver us? Oh no! He who thus looks upon himself, will not be long in seeing that there is a way of escape. Despairing of help in himself, and yet impressed with the absolute necessity of fleeing from the wrath to come, he will look unto him who is mighty to save. His eyes being opened by the mercy of God, he will look unto Christ, and beholding in him a Saviour, every way suited to his wants, he will receive and rest upon him alone for salvation. It is a great thing to see Christ. The very sight of the brazen serpent on the pole restored the serpent-bitten Israelites, and a correct view of Christ crucified for sin melts the most hardened heart, overcomes all its objections to the gospel, removes all its fears of the wrath of God, and gives us full assurance of his everlasting love. Henceforth there will be no trust-

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ing in self-righteousness—no vain attempts to add to the finished work of Christ.

Such are the preliminary steps to a walk with God on earth. There is a vast variety in the experiences of Christians, as to the ways in which they are led unto Christ. But no man is ever savingly converted to God, who is not made to know the *plague of his own heart,* 1 Kings viii. 38; who has not felt his own utter helplessness, and submitted his soul unreservedly and unconditionally into the hands of Christ.

2. These steps being taken, what is the after-course of such a beginning? What is there in the life of him who walks with God, to distinguish him from other men? If the professed Christian be sincere in his profession, there will be much in his outward deportment to distinguish him from the mass of those around him; but in a country where outward morality and good order are fashionable, we must look to the heart to find the chief difference. The heart of the Christian if opened to the gaze of men, would present a strange spectacle. There would be seen in it a constant struggle, between the Spirit of God on the one hand, and the power of sin on the other. Sin reigns in the mortal bodies of all men. Commonly it does not exert all its vigor; but when occasions offer, or efforts are made to cast it out, it is found to have implanted its roots deep in every affection of the heart, while its virulent poison brings desolation on the soul. *The wages of sin is death.* When the Spirit of God comes into the heart, inducing a man to walk with God, there must of course be a contest between our natural sinfulness and newly acquired principles of holiness. It is in vain to ask, why God does not at once make his people perfect in holiness, and free them from every remnant of sin? It would be easy to answer these questions, did time permit, but it is not necessary. It is sufficient for the present to remark that he has not seen best to do so. He wishes to let his people know experimentally, somewhat of the power of that enemy from which he delivers them, and hence it is that the contest between sin and holiness in the heart of the man of God is often so long and painful. Yet the world, even his most intimate friends, may know little or nothing of what passes in the secret chambers of his own breast. It is only by a slow and lingering death that the power of sin is destroyed in the heart. It is compared to crucifixion, a most painful and lingering form of violent death. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affec-*

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tions and lusts, Gal. v. 24. The heart must be diligently watched; the emotions of sin must be suppressed; pride must be mortified; selfishness cast out; impurity utterly forbidden; and everything that exalteth itself against God be cast down. But why spend words in describing that which the pen of inspiration has already so distinctly drawn. In the sixth and seventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, which I recommend to your special attention, is a full account of all that is needful to be known on this subject, illustrated and confirmed by the experience of the apostle Paul himself.

3. Furthermore. The man who walks with God, while thus seeking to mortify sin in his heart, is also earnestly desirous to be made perfectly holy. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness; he earnestly desires to present his heart as a pure offering to the Lord of hosts; and he labors to render his life conformable to the profession he has made. He humbles himself before God, Mic. vi. 8. He engages in his worship with hearty desires to honor him, and to experience his favor. He so regulates his life, as that nothing may appear in it displeasing to the Master he serves. He endeavors to bring others also to an acquaintance with God. Enoch and Noah, who walked with God, were preachers of righteousness; and every Christian, in his sphere, will endeavor to teach men the truth. If his mouth is closed, his example, at least, will testify to the excellence of the principles by which he professes to be actuated. He will walk in peace and equity, Mal. ii. 6, and do good to all men as he has opportunity. Far from living for himself alone, he will *remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. He will love all men, he will pray for all men, he will do good unto all men, as far as he has opportunity. Nor will all these be done merely for a time, nor by occasional efforts. It will be a settled principle with him. He will persevere in the way of holiness, even to the end of life. Opposition he will expect to meet, from within and without,—from men and from evil spirits. But he will go forward, notwithstanding all. Not in his own strength, not in reliance upon his own power, not with the spirit of boasting, but looking unto Christ, through whom he can do all things, in whom is all his strength, and to whom he renders all the praise for all the good he is enabled to do, and for every success that crowns his efforts, and cheers him on his way. Such is the heart, and such is the life of him who

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walks with God. The path in which he must walk, who walks with God on earth, is a rough and thorny one. Even Christ pleased not himself, and how should his followers expect more than their Master enjoyed. Yet surely it is a glorious thing thus to walk, in intimate and friendly intercourse with the King of kings. Surely it is no common honor to be called, as Abraham was, *the friend of God,* James ii. 27.

What manner of men should such be? Do you profess to walk with God? Is your heart, then, right before him? Does your life correspond with such a profession? Do you act in no respect differently from what you would, if you felt that God were by your side, when you go out, and when you come in? Is it now a pleasant thought to you, that he sees your inmost heart, hears every word of your tongues, and weighs every action you perform? Is it your daily care to shape your conduct as not to displease that holy God, before whom you walk? Remember that you cannot escape from his presence, and if you walk not with him as a friend, you must walk before him as an enemy, for among men he recognizes but two classes—those who are for him, and those who are against him. It is therefore yours to see and know whether you be on the Lord's side or not; and surely it should not be hard to know where you stand. We judge of a man by his associates. If you walk with the wise, you will be wise. If you walk with the bountiful, how can you be covetous? If with the compassionate, how be cruel? If with the holy, how can you delight in sin?

Judge, then, your own selves, and see to it that *ye walk after the Lord our God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and serve him, and cleave unto him,* Deut. xiii. 4.

Macao, July 16, 1843.

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SERMON X.

I AM A STRANGER IN THE EARTH.

I am a stranger in the earth.—PSALM cxix. 19.

SUCH is the memorable confession of David, the king and sweet psalmist of Israel. To some, it may appear strange, for there was apparently nothing in the latter part of his course that called for such an acknowledgment. It is true that in his early life he was a wanderer, driven to and fro, by the malice of Saul, as a leaf is tossed by the winds, and hunted like a partridge in the mountains; but in the latter part of his life, everything about him was as settled and home-like as could well be imagined. He was in his own country, and that country enjoyed peace and prosperity. He was among his relatives and friends, and they were many and powerful. He was in his own house. He was king over his own country, with everything that could make a throne desirable. His right to the throne was clear and undisputed, for the anointing oil of God was upon his head; the people heartily consented to his authority, and loved and reverenced him. He was honored at home, and respected and feared abroad. Distant nations sought his alliance; and under his reign, Israel saw its greatest extension and highest prosperity. He reigned securely on his throne, and was assured that his descendants after him should sit upon it; and that, in the course of time, the promised and long-expected Messiah should be numbered among his posterity. What more could he want to satisfy him? Why should he not quietly seat himself on his throne, and enjoy the luxuries around him? Yet, as far as we know, he never considered himself at home in this world. His constant declaration was, *I am a stranger in the earth.* The statutes of God were his *songs in the house of his pilgrimage*, Ps. cxix. 19, 54. In his prayers to God, he said, *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all*

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my fathers were; hide not thy face from my tears, Ps. xxxix. 12; and in his grateful praises and thanksgivings, near the close of a long life, his confession still was, *We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding,* 1 Chron. xxix. 15. It is wonderful how prone men are to think this world their home, and to sit down, as if they were to abide here forever. A greater, and yet a more common mistake, cannot well be imagined, nor one whose consequences are likely to prove more disastrous. Let me show you, both from Scripture and from the nature of the case, that *this is not your rest;* that you are strangers here, and that, therefore, it is your duty to live as strangers and pilgrims in the earth, seeking and pressing forward to a better, and an enduring inheritance.

1. The Scriptures are full of striking representations of the shortness and uncertainty of life. It is often compared to a *dream.* A dream may seem long while it is passing, yet it is philosophically certain nothing is more fleeting and transitory, and nothing seems so short when we look back upon it. Life is compared to a *vapor.* You have seen the morning mist, as it slowly curled around the mountain's brow, and, even while you gazed upon it, the sun's rays had caused it to vanish. Such is life. It is compared to the grass. In the morning, it groweth up and flourisheth,—in the evening, it is cut down, and withereth. It is like the flower of the field, that spreads its bright leaves to the morning air; but the noon-day sun withers them, and the night breeze scatters them, or the caterpillar feeds on them, the worm devours them, and the blight destroys them. Life is also oftentimes compared to a journey, and men to travellers.

This is especially remarkable in the cases of the venerable Hebrew patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet at first sight one would not be inclined to regard them as strangers in the earth. They were men of very great wealth and influence, and probably few private men could now be found in any country who could equal them in these respects. Thus of Abraham it is said, *Jehovah blessed him greatly, and he became great; having flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men servants, and maid servants, and camels, and asses,* Gen. xxiv. 35. The extent of his possessions may be inferred from the number of servants *born in his own house,* whom he was able to lead forth to the rescue of his brother Lot. There were no less than three hundred and

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eighteen; and as these could hardly be more than one fifth of the whole number he possessed, he must have been the master of twelve, or fifteen hundred servants, Gen. xiv. 14. And as the chief occupation of these servants was to attend to their master's cattle, it may well be conceived that the number of his flocks and herds must have been immense; so that we need not wonder when we are told that *the land was not able to bear them*, Gen. xiii. 6. Nor need we wonder therefore to find that Abraham was a man of so much power and influence that even the kings of Sodom and Gerar sought his favor, and formed treaties with him, Gen. xxi. 22. Of Isaac, too, it is recorded that his wealth and influence were very great. *The Lord blessed him, and he waxed great, and went forward; and grew until he became very great. For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants*, Gen. xxvi. 13, 14. Such was his wealth and power, that *the Philistines envied him*, and Abimilech, then king, at length said to him, *Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we*, Gen. xxvi. 14, 16. Jacob, too, was a man of great possessions, for he *increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels and asses*, Gen. xxx. 43.

With so much wealth—with so much influence—with such certain promises, so solemnly confirmed to them, that that land should be the perpetual inheritance of their children, one would have thought that they would feel at home there. Yet it was not so. They felt and confessed themselves still to be but strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

It was a touching scene when the venerable Abraham came to Hebron, to mourn for Sarah. He stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, *I am a stranger and sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight*, Gen. xxiii. 2–4. The only landed estate that he ever possessed in the land of Palestine was *a grave*—though the whole land was solemnly promised him for an everlasting possession.

To Isaac, God gave the command, *Sojourn in this land*, Gen. xxvi. 3. Or as it might be more literally rendered, *Be a stranger in this land;* and this command he carefully obeyed, while Jacob, who was always a wanderer, in Padan Aram, Palestine, and Egypt, near the close of his life, speaks of it as a painful pilgrimage. *The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,*

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and have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage, xlvii. 9. It was this constant acknowledgment of their being strangers and pilgrims, which induced the apostle to speak of them as he does in the Epistle to the Hebrews. *By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*, Heb. xi. 9–13.

Nor are these solitary examples. Moses, who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and who, for aught we know, might have sat upon the Egyptian throne, if he had so chosen, was a wanderer for the greater part of his life, *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* And in testimony of his willing choice of such a life, he named his eldest son *Gershom*, saying, *I have been a stranger in a strange land*, Ex. xxv. 22.

Leaving the times of the Old Testament, and coming down to those of the New, we find the same truth set forth with equal plainness, both in example and precept. Our blessed Saviour himself, the Lord of all, was but a stranger in the earth, while the meanest of the creatures he had made, had their homes. While the *foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head*, Luke ix. 58. His holy apostles had *no certain dwelling-place.* The early Christians lived as those who looked above this world; and the books of the New Testament are full of instructions exhorting earnestly to such a course. The apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, after highly praising the ancient patriarchs, who had acknowledged that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, says in reference to Christians of his own time, *Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come*, Heb. xiii. 14. Therefore it is, that he tells believers in another epistle, *Your conversation or citizenship* (πολιτεία), *is in heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. The first epistle of Peter, which was intended for Christians generally, is addressed to *the strangers scattered about* in different countries. And in the same epistle he exhorts them to *pass the time of their sojourning here in fear*, i. 17. And again, he *beseeches them, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*, ii. 11. Thus doth the

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Scripture both by precept and example, teach us to look upon this world, merely as a stage in our road to another.

2. As the Scriptures are thus explicit in teaching us to look beyond this world, regarding it merely as a place of pilgrimage; so we shall find if we consider the circumstances in which we are placed, that we are but strangers here. For what is it to be a stranger? Is not a stranger one of whom it is said, he has no suitable abode or home in the land of his sojournings; and the time he thus spends is but short compared with that he spends at home? And is it not true with reference to ourselves, that we have no suitable home in this world?

Since sin and death have entered our world, it is most manifest that this is not our home. I am not one of those who look upon this world as only one great prison-house—where no sound is heard but that of weeping—no sights are seen but those of sorrow. On the contrary, blasted as it has been by the poisoned breath of Satan, still it has scenes of surpassing beauty; still has it places that seem almost like the gates of heaven. But yet when every allowance is made, it is not a place of rest, and, *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*, Job xiv. 1. Consider how much suffering all men are called to endure. Who is there that has not felt the pangs of disappointment? You have looked for pleasure, and found sorrow; you have laid your plans for life, and been forced to abandon them, for entirely different pursuits. You have plucked the rose, but, alas, the flower fell as you grasped it, and the thorn alone remained. You have delighted in the society of kind friends, and they have died before your faces, and you have buried them out of your sight.

> "Friend after friend departs,
> Who hath not lost a friend?
> There is no union here of hearts,
> That finds not here an end."

Or if they have not been removed by death, their affection for you has grown cold, and you have experienced a pain that death could not have inflicted upon you, by finding that those in whom your hearts safely trusted, have proved false to you. How many unexpected misfortunes come upon men! Who is secure from them? You may pass years and years in uninterrupted prosperity, and in the moment when you least expect it, all your joys shall

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take wings and fly away, and you shall be left desolate. I well remember the morning of a sabbath-day, when I stood upon the deck of a noble ship, as she ploughed her foaming way across the waters of the China sea. I was conversing with the chief officer, and can recall even now, the tone of exultation with which he said, that he counted himself one of the most fortunate of all those who did business upon the great waters. He had been a sailor from his childhood, and never met with an accident, and his prospects never were brighter than they were at that moment. Twelve hours had not elapsed, when that gallant ship was fast sinking beneath the raging waves. She had struck upon a sunken rock, and filled with water so rapidly that all on board were obliged to leave her and seek for safety in her boats. That officer left the ship with only the clothes upon his back, and after traversing over four hundred miles of the open sea, in that little boat, he was overtaken by a storm, and in sight of land his boat was overturned, and himself dashed against the rocky shore. Bruised and almost senseless, he gained the land, and found that of his five companions, four had been drowned, and that he was a penniless, homeless man—a stranger in a strange land. Would that this were a solitary case! How much suffering and misery, also arises from the errors even of the good! A single fault may cause heart-breaking sorrow for a whole lifetime. Surely, a world where such events can happen, never was intended for the home of happy beings.

3. But even if there were no actual suffering, this world as it now is, was not intended for our home, because it has nothing that can satisfy the ever expanding desires of the immortal mind. The soul of man was made for eternity, and it cannot be, that it should be satisfied with the desires of time. Most men seek for wealth, but who is ever satisfied with the greatest amount of gold and silver? Are not those who have the most, constantly grasping after more, and at the same time anxious and alarmed lest they should lose what they have already acquired? Others seek after honor and power, but who is ever satisfied with the highest honor, or the greatest power? When is ambition full? When do conquerors cease from conquest, if death do not end their course. Others again seek after literary fame, but who is even satisfied here? Look at the gifted Byron, who with talent and rank, and wealth and fame, to satisfy the desires of a hundred common men, still

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longed and pined for more. "Beyond desire, beyond ambition full," he yet died in utter wretchedness!

Who is there that is satisfied in this world? Not one. And if men had the most ardent desire of their hearts gratified, and were allowed to live here forever, they would still find in their breasts an aching void, which the world could never fill. Ask him who of all men was best qualified to judge—Solomon, king of Israel, who had wealth, and honor, and power, and ease, and wisdom, such as no man either before or since has ever possessed. He made it his business to seek after happiness, for what can the man do that cometh after the king? You have heard his memorable conclusion. *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities: all is vanity. All is vanity and vexation of spirit.* Again I ask, are we not strangers in such a world as this?

If this world were our home, our final resting-place, it would be a sad world indeed. Even short as our life is, it is too long for many, and our ears are almost daily pained with accounts of those who lay violent hands upon themselves, and rush uncalled into the presence of their God. Even those who enjoy the greatest amount of happiness here, will almost wish at times to die. And Paul who counted it an unspeakable privilege, a grace of which he was not worthy to preach Christ on earth, was often in a strait between two conflicting emotions, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ. All experience as well as Scripture testifies aloud, *This is not your rest.* We may go to and fro, seeking rest, but as Noah's dove found no place of rest for the sole of her foot, when the wild waves of the deluge covered the earth, so do our hearts find no rest, where the troubled billows of sin dash so thickly around.

4. Another characteristic that distinguishes a stranger, is, that his sojourn in the place where he is a stranger is but short. It needs no labored or lengthened proof to show that in this respect we are strangers in the earth. *For what is your life? It is even a vapor, which quickly vanisheth away.* In childhood and youth, life in anticipation looks long. As we grow older and look back, how short. Yes, and the older we grow, the shorter it seems. An old man will recount the tales of his boyhood, and tells you that it seems but as yesterday, when he looks back to events in the lives of his friends, over whose tombs the grass of many years is growing. The antediluvians numbered their years by centuries, but they are gone, and their works have followed them, and to us

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it is as if they never had a being. The patriarch who numbered more than six-score years, said that his days had been *few* as well as evil, and Moses, when five-score years had whitened his locks, declared, *we spend our years as a tale that is told. It is soon cut off and we fly away.* Yes, *fly away*, for there is none abiding here, and our days make haste to depart. The afflicted patriarch too, in the midst of his long life, had reason to say, *My days are swifter than a post, they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey*, Job ix. 25. It is even so. *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.* Our afflictions may be hard to bear, but they are but *for a moment. The end of all things is at hand. The Judge standeth at the door.* And there is not one of us, who may not say with David, *There is but a step between me and death.* I have seen the old oak fall, and the little flower that sprung up beneath its shade, crushed by its fall. So have I seen the patriarch of three-score years and ten, and the infant of a few days, buried in the same grave, and when a few years had passed away, it seemed as though the life of one, were almost as long as that of the other.

Who is there that finds life long enough to accomplish all the plans he has in view? One man seeks to accumulate a certain amount of wealth. Another, to reach a certain point in power. A third, to see his children comfortably settled in life. A fourth, to get himself a name, yet three of the four shall die before their desires are half accomplished. Some men fill stations of eminent usefulness in the church, and in the state, and length of days for them seems greatly desirable, yet they fade away, apparently, before the half of their work is done. Is this our *home?* Is a world, whatever its other sources of enjoyment may be, where such sorrows come upon us, and such disappointments embarrass us, the place where we are to build us mansions for eternity? Oh no! Scripture and reason, and sad experience teach us that here we have no continuing city, no suitable home, no happy, quiet place of rest. *We are strangers in the earth.* As one who feels himself to be a stranger in the earth, suffer me to address you, and to apply practically the truth I have been endeavoring to illustrate.

1. Do not unnecessarily encumber yourselves with earthly things and cares. You are a stranger here. You are rapidly passing through this world, and you can carry none of its treasures away with you. Why should you, then, set your hearts upon them, and give all your time, and strength, and affections, to those

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things, that perish even with the using of them? Why set your hearts on those things that will only retard your progress, and in the end be of no avail to you? Why load yourselves with that which will but weary you in your course, and, in all probability, cause you bitter regret in the end? What should you think of the man, who, when running for his life, should stop and loiter by the way, picking flowers, and gathering stones, and loading himself with thick clay?

2. I would not recommend a casting away of all the good things of this world, nor blame one for seeking to better his condition here. But it is wrong to seek earthly things as of the first and chief importance, neglecting those that are unseen and heavenly. While you seek after this world's goods, set your affections on those things that are above, and if you are disappointed here, you will not be there. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: all other things needful shall be added unto you.*

3. As you are but travellers through this world, act as travellers do. You must not expect always to find pleasant roads, nor the accommodations of home at the wayside inns. You must look for bad weather, and be prepared for rough times. Neither must you expect always to find the most pleasant fellow-travellers, nor always to enjoy the society of those whom you most admire. It is true, you are all bound to the same place,—but you take different roads, and some are longer, some shorter in arriving. Some may finish their journey before the sun is up; some when his full rays are beating down upon them; while others, again, may travel on, till the shades of evening gather thickly around them. Those who started with a crowd, may end their journey alone. But grieve not for this. If you have taken the right course, and are seeking the right place, you shall all meet at last, and, amidst the delights of home, you may recount with joy the dangers and the trials, or the pleasures of the way by which you have been led. Look upon the discomforts which you find, then, as the necessary inconveniences of a traveller's life. Let not your hearts be disquieted for them. They will soon be over, and their remembrance shall hereafter afford you pleasure. The traveller, after his fatiguing journeys, the sailor, in his quiet harbor, after his shipwrecks and toils are safely passed, delights to recount the incidents he has seen, and the dangers he has encountered. So may you, when safely lodged in your everlasting mansions. The troubles and trials you may encounter, should be looked upon as

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real blesings. If your course, in this life, led you always through the "plain of ease," you would be almost loth to depart. These afflictions are needful, to wean your affections from the world, and quicken you in your heavenward course. Who is there that cannot testify that he has served God better, and longed for heaven more, when outward things looked dark, and storms raged around him, than when all was smooth, and peaceful, and serene?

4. But here a question of infinite importance arises. You are strangers here, and travellers to another place. Where, then, is your home? Whither are you bound? You are going hence, and it is most certain that you never shall return. Where, then, do you expect to make your permanent abode? Do you not know whither you are bound? You know you cannot remain here. You know there are but two other worlds to which you can go,—and have you not yet found out to which your course is directed?

As I take it for granted that you wish to reach a better world than this, allow me to tell you, that there is but one road by which you can do it, and that, while the life of your soul depends upon your finding that road, and walking in it, wherever it may lead you, it is yet exceedingly difficult to enter, and hard to pursue. How strait is the gate, how narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life. How few there be that find it! On the other hand, there are many wrong roads, broad and smooth, and easily entered, with many by-paths and cross-roads, that are easily mistaken for the true one, and all of which are crowded by multitudes of travellers. *Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth unto death: many there be which go in thereat.* You have need, therefore, of a chart of your way, to show you which is the right, and which the wrong road. You have need of a compass, to direct you in your course, and especially you need a guide and defender, who can lead you, and keep you in all the way which you go, and bring you in safety to the end of your journey. All these, however, can be obtained. The word of God is such a chart. It distinctly points out the right road, and so clearly lays down every other, that you cannot mistake them. Therefore it was that David prayed, *I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me.* And again he says, *Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.* Study carefully, therefore, the word of God; and with faith in your heart, which,

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like a compass, ever points to heaven, you will not go astray. For a guide and defender, you have the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He has trod the way before you, and knows every step,—*for he was, in all points, tempted like as we are, though without sin.* That road he watered with his own blood, and, through the merits of his sufferings and death, he removed its otherwise impassable difficulties, and now, whosoever will, may come unto God by him. Study his character; imitate his example; walk in his footsteps; learn of him, and he will bring you in safety to the end of your course, and present you with exceeding joy in the presence of his Father.

5. Keep the end of your journey in mind, and suffer your thoughts often to dwell upon the glories of the home that God has prepared for those who persevere in the right ways. This will quicken your steps, and cheer your hearts, when fainting under the discouragements and weariness of the way. Why should you not do so? A child, away from home, will think with tears of his father's house; and should you be forgetful of the mansions prepared for you? The last part of your course may be difficult, for it may lead you through a deep and dark river, "over which there is no bridge;" but if you think as you ought of the habitations beyond that river, it will make you willing to go through even those dark rolling waves. Your citizenship is in heaven—your best friends are there—your treasures are there—your everlasting rest and happiness are there. Meditate upon these things, therefore, and you will even long to depart.

But while in your pilgrimage below, remember that you have a very great work to do, and that now is your only time for accomplishing it. Now is the day of salvation, when you must secure the welfare of your soul. Now is the time for glorifying God; now is the time for bringing others to a knowledge of himself. There is no work or service in the grave, to which you are hastening. Be diligent, therefore, and work while your journey continues, and you will have time enough to rest when your journey is ended.

Macao, July 23, 1843.

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SERMON XI.

COMING UNTO CHRIST FOR REST.

Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—MATTHEW xi. 28–30.

IT is related of Luther, before he had entered on his course as a Reformer, that every time he heard the name of Christ, he turned pale with terror; for he had been represented to him only as an angry judge.*

It is strange that any one who has ever heard one word of Christ, could thus represent him. Every attribute of the Godhead was found in perfection in him, but some were more fully drawn out than others, by the circumstances in which he was placed. He is a God of holiness, and one might have supposed that surrounded as he was by sinful men, constantly endeavoring to blacken his character, and to thwart his purposes, the threatenings of wrath would be ever on his lips. But he is also a God long-suffering and compassionate, and surrounded as he was by objects of misery, though all unconscious themselves of their condition, his heart melted over their sorrows, and he proved himself a merciful and faithful High Priest, who could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

It is delightful to contemplate his course through life. *He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil*, Acts x. 34. One after another, as objects of distress presented themselves before him, his heart was moved by sympathy for them. A leper covered with sores, and cast out from society, with the weeds of mourning around him, *came and knelt before him, and Jesus moved with compassion put forth his hand and touched*

* D'Aubigné, i. 123.

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him, and cleansed him from his leprosy, Mark i. 4. He saw the widow of Nain, as she followed her only son to the grave. It needed no words to inform him of the sorrows and desolation of her heart. *When the Lord saw her he had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not*, Luke vii. 13. With a word he restored the young man to life, and delivered him unto his mother. With the sisters of Lazarus, he wept at Lazarus' grave, but with the compassion and power which Christ alone possessed, he raised him from the dead. When did he ever forbear to relieve any that came to him? When did he send any away? And how kindly were his favors given! Men wondered at his gracious words. Little children loved to be with him, *for he took them in his arms and blessed them.*

It is true that our Saviour at times spoke in anger. It could not be otherwise. And we read that expression, which conveys such a weight of terrible meaning, *the wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. Yet even his wrath was mingled with mercy, and his threatenings ended in tears. You have seen the clouds gather blackness, and listened to the thunder's voice, as it rolled and re-echoed through the vaults of heaven. Yet the blackness passed away, and the gentle showers came down upon the earth. Even so it was when our Lord uttered those awful woes against the wicked rulers of the Jews. *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees —hypocrites—ye shall receive the greater damnation. How can ye escape the damnation of hell?* Yet in the same discourse his heart melted for the city of God, and in grief he exclaimed, *Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not*, Matt. xxiii.

Nor was his love exhausted in words. It showed itself in all the actions of his life, and more especially in his last great work —his death upon the cross for the sins of men. This is the person who utters the words of our text. His character gives him a claim to be heard,—his works for us give him a right to be obeyed.

The persons addressed are all men. He uses one of the few terms that will apply to all the sons of Adam. He does not say, Ye rich and noble, come unto me, for all are not rich and noble. Neither does he say, Ye poor and degraded, come unto me, for all are not poor and degraded. But, *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* Who is there, not included in these terms? Who is there that has no sorrows or

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burdens? That is not troubled with griefs and fears? That has no causes of disquietude? Happy man! if such there be. But think again. Is it not true that *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards?* Job v. 7. Is it not true that *all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief? yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night*, Ecc. ii. 23. The occasions of sorrow are various. Wherever happiness is sought for, sorrow is found lurking. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Man being in honor abideth not. Learning wears a man down; Fame exposes him to envy and detraction; Friendships are dissolved by separation or by death. No state or age is free from care and anxiety. Men talk of the joys and happiness of childhood,—but surely that is an unobservant look, which does not discern in the contentions and jealousies and tears of childhood, the first fruits of the curse, *In sorrow shalt thou eat all the days of thy life*, Gen. iii. 17.

It should however be noted, that outward sorrows are but a small part of those that make up the lot of man. If there were peace and quietness in the heart, it would make but little difference if things around were unpleasant. The storms that agitate the sea, extend only a few feet below its surface; and the inhabitants of its inner depths are not disturbed by the commotions above. But it is not so with man. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and the joyous laugh is often assumed merely to cover up and conceal the deep sea of suffering beneath. There is in the breast of every man an evil heart. It is full of sin, and delights in sin; but in the nature of things it is not possible to follow sin without also tasting its bitterness. Conscience, the vicegerent of God, has its station in the heart. You may deaden its tones. You may for awhile silence its voice, but destroy it you cannot. Sooner or later its voice must be heard, and when it speaks of death, and righteousness, of sin, and the judgment-day, of heaven, and of hell, you will find that earthly joys and earthly hopes will not ease the mind. It is only by forgetting such things that most men wear the semblance of happiness. Hence, many seek to banish thought. This were wise, if thereby misery also were banished. But it is not the part of wisdom thus to act. I appeal to your own hearts, are not these things so? Have you not often found sorrow where you sought for joy? Have you not feared the thought of standing in the presence of God? Has not your own heart often condemned you? Do you not fear to die?

He who sees all hearts knows what is in man. He has fath-

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omed the deep sea of human sufferings and fears. He came to share their woes, and to relieve their sorrows; and his heart often melted at the sights he saw. He was a man of sorrows, but not for his own sorrows. He saw men laboring in the service of sin and Satan,—pressed down by a cruel yoke,—driven by a hard master,—serving for his wages,—and such wages! True, he offers fair, and they knew not that the wages of sin is death. The Saviour saw us heavy laden with sorrows, and staggering under a load that was carrying us down to the bottomless pit; and he saw that there was no help for us in ourselves,—none in our fellow-men,—and none even in the holy angels who saw us perishing. Strong then in the might of his own divinity, with compassion like a God, he came down for our relief; and with a heart overflowing with love to us, he calls to every weary, heavy-laden, desponding soul, *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

Hear then the words of Christ. *Come unto me.* This implies that naturally you are far off from him. Else, why the necessity of coming? He is the fountain of life, and the giver of every good; but we keep away from him, nor yield our hearts to his control. What is the consequence? Away from the sun, how can you have light? Away from the fire, how can you be warmed? Away from the source of life, how can you live? And why thus separated from him? Has he driven you away? Has he dealt unkindly by you? Has he ever said *seek ye my face in vain?* No! We have chosen to depart. We have said in our hearts, *This man shall not reign over us.* We have said by our deeds, if not by our words, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* This is the first thing needful for us to know, to wit, our distance from him, and the sorrowful consequences attending it. When the prodigal son had almost starved himself among the swine, his first thought on coming to his right mind was, that he had voluntarily but most foolishly and wickedly left his father's house, and though as yet no invitation from his father had reached him, he resolved to return to him and seek a place even among the servants.

Like the prodigal you and I have gone astray. Like him we have wasted our substance. Like him we have sinfully neglected the service of the best of fathers. Like him, we are in danger of perishing among the vile pleasures of this world, and its empty promises, while there is enough and to spare of soul-satisfying

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joys and eternal blessings in the house of God. Why should this be so? Though we have thus acted, though the Saviour might most justly leave all to perish in our own misery, yet he does not so. He follows, entreats, urges you to return. He sees and pities the miseries present and to come of his creatures. You may affect to laugh, but his heart yearns over you, and it seems as though he could not give you up. What more could be done than he has done for you? Ye are poor, *and though he was rich, yet for your sakes he made himself poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.* You are in danger of perishing in sin, like the serpent-bitten Israelites. He was lifted upon the cross that you might see, and be drawn unto him. You are dying, and to save you from death, he dies himself, and asks you to come unto him, and obtain the life he has to offer. Why should you not return? Like erring children who fear the sight of their father's face you hesitate to see him again.

Perhaps you are ready to say, "We wish to return, we have long sought to do so, but know not the way, and hitherto have not succeeded." But how have you sought? Where have you looked for direction? Where sought for the strength and wisdom needful for such a return? There is but one way of return to God, and if you have not walked in that way, in vain will you hope ever to see his face. That way is the way Christ has pointed out in the words of the text. *Come unto me. Take my yoke upon you. Learn of me.* These three things are the way-marks of that road. First. Knowing and grieving over your natural distance from God, you must come unto him. Secondly. You must take his yoke upon you. By his yoke is meant that which connects you to him, and binds you to his service. It includes therefore a separation from the world, for you cannot serve Christ and the world. It includes an utter renunciation of all self-righteousness, as a ground of hope before God. Your own righteousness and the righteousness of Christ cannot be patched together to make a garment, wherewith to appear in his presence. The laws of the ancient temple did not allow the priests to minister in robes woven of linen and of wool. Nor do the laws of the spiritual temple of which Christ is the chief corner-stone, allow the worshippers to appear clothed in any other garment, than that of Christ's righteousness. Your justification and acceptance before God is obtained by simple faith alone; and the sincerity of your faith is to be shown by your deep and hearty repentance

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of past errors and sins, and your persevering and universal obedience to all his commands. This is the third thing requisite. *Learn of me.* Study the character of Christ as exhibited from his life to his death. This is the great thing to be known. Imitate his example, especially in his meekness and humility. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.* It is a strange command this, to our fallen nature, and one most opposite to all our natural feelings. It is a hard thing to make our stubborn wills submit to the will of God, and humbly and cheerfully to bow before him. Yet surely it becomes us in the presence of our holy and absolute sovereign to veil all the pride of human wisdom and human greatness, and to behave as weaned children before him. Who are we, that presume to lift up ourselves in the presence of our judge? Who are we that we should refuse to bear his yoke? Surely too the example of Christ, if there were no other motives, should teach us humility. How is it possible for frail and sinful man to behold the Lord of Glory in the form of a servant,—washing the disciples' feet, and submitting to the malefactor's death,—and still retain high thoughts of himself? No, my brethren, *let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;* and remember that *unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

The invitation of Christ, *come unto me,* is not a mere command. It calls you to a course of life in some respects painful, and in many ways opposite to the natural course of your thoughts. He does not conceal from you the fact, that if you come to him, you must renounce your fancied independence, and take up a yoke, and a burden, and engage in a service, that shall end only with life. But consider a moment before you refuse to listen to his call. What condition in life is free from similar or harder terms. Man was not made to be independent. With all our boastings of our greatness and glory, there is not a creature in the wide world so dependent, so helpless as ourselves. You must lean on others, even on a bruised reed, if no other support presents itself. Independence is not sacrificed by taking the yoke of Christ, for man has no such independence to give up. By taking his yoke you only exchange your dependence on creatures like yourselves, for dependence upon the living God. And is it not a noble exchange? By bearing his burden, you exchange the service of Satan and the world, for that of Christ; and is it not an object worthy of desire, to serve such a master? The honor of

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being his servants alone were sufficient, but the rewards he offers are such as to make his service incomparably the most desirable in the universe.

You are now serving a hard master, and what do you gain by it? A few fleeting, transitory pleasures, marred by the fear of future sorrows; a few sweet draughts, dashed with the bitter drops that conscience infuses in them; a few delusive hopes for the future, which but thinly cover the awful realities beyond. You are toiling and laboring after this world's happiness, and if you gained it, what would you gain? *What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* But what have you gained? Are all the pleasures of this world which you have already enjoyed, a sufficient compensation for the anxiety, and watching, and toil by which you have obtained them? Could you consent to live forever, laboring as you have done, if you never expected to enjoy more of the fruits of your labor than you have hitherto done? Hear then the words of Christ. *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* What is so delightful as rest after labor? The soldier delights to sit down in security when the battle is over, and enjoy the fruits of his valor. The sailor, to rest in the quiet harbor when the tempest is over, and enjoy the reward of his watchings and toils. Heaven itself is called *a Rest*, Heb. iv. 9. And what a rest! No more painful watchings, or labors. No more sorrows, no more sicknesses, nor separations. No wearisome calms, nor fearful storms, for there is no sea there. No doubts or fears, no dealings with the wicked. Job sought for rest in the grave, *where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;* but Christ promises rest in heaven to all who come unto him—a rest, too, that is freely given. *I will give you rest.* It is acquired by the life-blood of Christ, but it is given to his people without money, and without price. They may toil and labor here, and endure suffering and sorrows, but this only makes the thought of rest more delightful. "Oh!" said Robert Hall in the midst of his long and excruciating sufferings, "I can form no more glorious idea of heaven, than that it is a place of rest." And yet it is not merely a place of rest from labor and suffering; it is also a place of most delightful and unwearying activity in the love and service of God. Hence the remark of Wilberforce was equally correct with that of Hall, when he said that the happiness of heaven appeared to him to consist in the constant activity of the

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soul in loving and serving God, without the incumbrances of the flesh, or the clogs of sin.

But the rest of the Christian is not all in anticipation. He is called to sacrifices and privations, and self-denial here; but in the midst of them all he enjoys that which more than compensates for them. It was no paradox, but the words of truth and soberness that our Saviour uttered when he said, *Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come everlasting life*, Luke xviii. 29, 30. To be engaged in the service of God, and to march under his banner, rather than under that of Satan, is itself a glorious thing. To be allowed to hope, without presumption, for the happiness of his chosen people above, is worth far more than many present inconveniences; and to enjoy the sense of his favor here, and feel the sustaining influences of his grace, together with freedom from all apprehensions of future evil, surely these things make his yoke an easy yoke, his burden a light burden. What man of the world can say, as Dr. Watts often said, "I bless God that though for many years I have never lain down at night without feeling that I might be called to eternity before morning, yet it has never caused me a moment's uneasiness!" The peace of mind, and well-grounded confidence that will thus enable every one to look death in the face, and calmly consider all that lies beyond the grave, is not of this world's gift. But it is one of those things included in the promise of our Saviour to all who come unto him. *Ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

Macao, July 30, 1848.

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SERMON XII.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES IN GENESIS.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.—GEN. iii. 15.

Blessed be the Lord God of Shem. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.—GEN. ix. 26, 27.

In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.—GEN. xxii. 17, 18.

I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.—GEN. xxvi. 4.

Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.—GEN. xxviii 14.

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people (nations) be.—GEN. xlix. 10.

THOSE accustomed to the full revelations of the New Testament, find it difficult to conceive the real feelings of believers in ancient times, or to understand their views of the way of salvation. They knew that a Saviour was to come. They earnestly expected him, and their anxiety for his appearance was shown in the term by which they commonly designated him, *He that should come*, as though there were but one person whose coming were of supreme importance. *Art thou he that should come*, said John to the Saviour, *or do we look for another?*

The light which they had concerning him was but faint, compared to that which we enjoy—but they were not totally destitute. A man can see enough to save his life at times, by the taper's ray, or the glimmering of the stars, even though he have not the sun's full light; and the predictions concerning Christ, made to the ancient believers, though far less distinct than the revelations we possess, were yet so clear as to afford satisfactory information con-

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cerning him, on whom all their hopes depended. It will be interesting and profitable to consider the successive predictions respecting Christ, made in the patriarchal times, from Adam till the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. In this long period of two thousand five hundred years, we find men constantly departing farther and farther from the truth as taught to our first parents; and yet the farther they departed, the more clearly did the voice of God, in prophecy, call their attention to the Saviour of sinners, in due time to be revealed. Several prophecies concerning him were given during this period, each one brighter and clearer than the one before, and each one pointing with infallible certainty to that on which the salvation of a world depended—Christ, and him crucified.

There was gloom and sadness in the world upon the fall of our first parents. Adam could have known nothing of forgiving mercy. Before his fall he had known God, as a God of love, but he also knew him as a God of justice. He had as yet heard no promises of mercy to the guilty; but he had heard the threatening, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* It is worthy of note also, that Adam's views of the heinousness of sin were much deeper than ours now are. Fancy to yourselves, that one of the holy inhabitants of heaven, surrounded by myriads of holy beings in that place where sin had never been heard of, and with the pure eye of God upon him, should suddenly commit a single sin. With what feelings would those around gaze upon him? What sensations would fill his own breast, as he met their indignant eyes, and felt too that he stood in the presence of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold evil? Would he not flee away from the scene which he had been the first to defile with sin, and hide himself if possible where no eye should ever see him again? Such, to some extent, must have been the feeling of Adam and his wife, when they awoke to the consciousness of what they had done, and their eyes were opened to see, that not merely were their bodies naked but their souls were exposed without shield or shelter to the avenging justice of an insulted, and a holy God. What hope could they have? No wonder they hid themselves when they heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden. They expected only death—and the first interrogations of the Lord would only increase their alarm. *Adam, where art thou? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat thereof?* Stripped of every plea, and naked, our first

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parents stood before their judge. The examination was short, for their own hearts condemned them, and they were now examined by that God who was greater than their hearts. Doubtless, their hearts beat with fear, when they heard the curse denounced against the serpent. *Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.* If such a curse be denounced against an irrational animal, which was but the instrument of an evil spirit for evil, what did they deserve, who free to stand, had yet suffered themselves to fall? who possessing powers sufficient to sustain their innocency, had chosen to believe and obey Satan rather than God? But behold, even out of the thick gloom, a light arises; and before all the curse upon the serpent, and the devil who had used him for his instrument, had been pronounced, hope had sprung up in their breasts. The very curse against the serpent gave them reason to hope that blessings were still in store for them. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

By the seed of the woman, we understand the children of God in all ages; but especially does it refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who without any human father was born of a virgin—and in whom all the people of God find their strength and support in every conflict. By the serpent and his seed, we understand the devil, the arch enemy of our race, and all those among men, who are not the children of God. They are those to whom our Saviour said, *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*, John xviii. 44. The words of the text therefore are a prediction of a contest, long and painful, between the righteous and the wicked, and especially between Satan and Christ. For a time the contest might appear doubtful, but in the end, a vital injury shall be inflicted on the serpent and his seed. His head shall be bruised; while on the contrary, the injury inflicted on Christ and his followers, though painful for a time, shall yet be as insignificant and harmless as a bruise upon the heel.

It is not intended, at present, to enter into a full discussion of this and the subsequent prophecies. It requires but a slight examination, however, to see how exactly it is fulfilled in the sufferings and death of the Saviour of the world. Against him, did that *old serpent, the devil,* array all the powers of earth and hell.

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With ceaseless malice, he persecuted him from his cradle to the grave. He raised against him the jealousy of Herod, the scorn of the Sadducees, the bitter hatred of the Pharisees, the shouts of the unthinking crowd, and the potent power of the Roman sword. Not satisfied to raise up enemies from without, he sought even to pollute the holy soul of Christ by his temptations, and when that failed, he stirred up one of his own disciples to betray him, another to deny him, and all of them to forsake him and flee. He thought, for a time, that his triumph was complete, when the lifeless body of Christ was laid in the tomb, and the Roman guard watched the sealed sepulchre. But the seed of the woman was greater than all of Satan's power, and the wound he received, though apparently mortal, proved to be slight and harmless; for by death, he overcame him that had the power of death. The rocky tomb had no power to retain the Prince of life, and, when he rose from the dead, he inflicted a wound on the head of Satan, from which there is no recovery. So it is with the cause of Christ on earth. The decisive battle has been fought, and the chief victory gained; but the contest is not yet ended. To an uninitiated eye, it seems to be carried on with unabated vigor, and the seed of the woman often appears to suffer loss. But the experience of the past, as well as the sure word of prophecy, abundantly testifies that these reverses are but seeming. They are but bruises of the heel; for a while they seem to retard the progress of the sufferer, but they do not take away his strength, nor prevent his dealing such strokes upon the adversary, as show that the battle is not to him that seems most strong. Christianity has met with reverses even in our own days, and some of our strongholds seem almost abandoned; but an impartial survey will testify, that at no time since the creation of the world was the true religion more widely diffused than it is at this moment; and at no time, if we except, perhaps, the first few years after the ascension of Christ, were its means of conquest, or prospects of final victory greater than they now are. The contest, it is true, is not yet ended. Nay, it may be that a period of deeper gloom and sorer trial than has ever yet befallen the church of God, is still to come, and must be passed through. But be it so. It will be but the last struggle of the almost vanquished enmity of the serpent. It will be followed by a complete victory; for, to use the language of the apostle, *the God of peace shall bruise*

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Satan under your feet shortly, Rom. xvi. 20; and the seed of the woman shall reign over the nations of the earth.

Such is the meaning of the first prophecy in the Bible. It has well been called, the *Protevangelium*, or first preaching of the gospel on earth. In its comprehensive grasp, it contains, in miniature, the life of Christ on earth—the history of every individual believer, from the beginning to the end of time—together with the outlines of the history of every church, in every land—and of the whole church militant on earth. I do not mean that it appeared thus clear and distinct to Adam and Eve. They could not understand it as fully as we may, who can compare scripture with scripture, and judge of the meaning of prophecy from other parts of revelation, and from its glorious fulfilment. All our first parents could gather from it, was the fact of final deliverance; but when, or how, or by whom, they could not tell. But it was a glorious thing to have even such a hope. They were not obliged to lie down in sorrow, for the promise sounded sweetly in their ears, amidst all the pains and sorrows of their fallen condition; *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* Doubtless, this promise formed a watchword for believers during the ages before the flood; but when, at that great catastrophe, the human race was swept away, and but a single family remained, the wavering faith of man required its renewal. It was renewed to Noah, and from his three sons, one was selected, from among whose descendants the great deliverance was to come. In Gen. ix. 26, 27, the blessing of Noah upon his sons is recorded. *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.* It was not without intention, that Noah calls God *the God of Shem.* Inspired by the spirit of prophecy, he foresaw that from among the posterity of his second son, Shem, the hope of the world should arise. Nor should the blessing be confined to those among whom it first appears. The sun rises in the east, but his rays illumine the world. The Lord God was to be in a peculiar manner the God of Shem, but he should also enlarge Japhet, and the church should be increased from among his descendants. It has been so. The Saviour of the world was a descendant of Shem, and at the present time the largest portion of the Christian church is found among the posterity of Japhet, who are now fast occupying and ruling over all the seats of Shem.

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But Shem had many sons, and the faith of the ancient believers needed some more definite information, than the mere announcement that from among them the Lord would provide salvation. Out of his sons therefore, God chose one, to be the depositary of his great promises, and the keeper of the truth till the time appointed. *To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.* We have now a promise and prophecy, made to Abraham,—confirmed to Isaac,—and repeated to Jacob. *In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* By the seed of Abraham, according to the apostle's testimony, we are to understand chiefly, the Lord Jesus Christ—*to thy seed which is Christ*, Gal. iii. 16. The blessings spoken of, of which all the families of the earth were to partake, are both temporal and spiritual. The civilization of the nations of ancient and modern times is more to be attributed to the influence of the Israelites, than to any other cause. It is almost certain that the art of writing came first from the Hebrews, and was transmitted from them through the Phenicians to the Greeks and Romans.

But it was chiefly the unspeakable gift of salvation for the soul, that was meant, in the promise, *In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* However important and desirable the arts of civilized life, and the enjoyments of intellectual pursuits, they are not to be compared with the welfare of the soul,—its freedom from the claims of the law,—and its happiness in heaven.

The promise here referred to was still indefinite. It did not distinctly define to the ancient church, who their deliverer was to be. It is probable that to some members of that church clearer revelations were made than to the mass of believers. Abraham probably knew much more of Christ, than did those around him, who heard only the promise of which we are speaking. Christ expressly says *Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad*, John viii. 56. It may have been when he was in the mount, about to offer up his beloved Isaac, that revelations were made to him, not vouchsafed to others.

Still the promise was a glorious one. The selection of a particular family, showed that God had not altered his purposes of mercy. It was a beacon of hope to the lost—a lighthouse on the world's wide ocean—and its clear light and cheering beams would enliven many a heart that looked for deliverance in Israel.

Nor was it long before a prediction more clear and decided

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still was given. Abraham was dead, and Isaac was dead, and Jacob felt the hour of his dissolution near. He sent for his sons, the fathers of the future tribes of Israel, and told to each what should befall them in the latter days. The xlix. chapter of Genesis contains the record of what his eye saw when it looked into the unveiled depths of futurity. In the midst of his predictions of the prosperity of Judah, he utters a prophecy, whose clearness and beauty finds scarcely a parallel in Holy Writ. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be*, Gen. xlix. 10. It is easy to see that this is but one of the links of that chain of prophecy whose preceding parts we have already considered. It refers to the same great event. Here you have first the time of the expected deliverer; secondly, his character; thirdly, his success. As to the time, it was to be when the sceptre was departing from Judah, and the power of her lawgivers vanishing away. Look through the long line of ages for nearly seventeen hundred years after this prophecy was uttered, and amidst all the changes in the history of Israel, you will find that the tribe of Judah still retained the pre-eminence. Even after the country became a Roman province, Judea was governed by the rulers who ruled over it before it was conquered by the Romans. But in the very year when Archelaus was removed by the Romans, and a Roman appointed as the governor of Judea,—when the sceptre had finally departed from Judea, never to return, in that very year did Christ first appear as the appointed and expected Deliverer. He was but twelve years old when he was found in the temple, in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions; in that year the sceptre departed from Judah, and it was needful that he should be about his Father's business.

His character corresponded with the descriptions of the prophecy, with equal exactness. He is there denominated *Shiloh*, a word denoting *peace*, or *peaceful*. You may remember that Isaiah calls him the Prince of Peace, and that the apostle calls him *our Peace*. Well does he deserve to bear such a title. It has ever been the great object of Satan to produce enmity between God and man, and too well has he succeeded. But the object of the coming of Christ, was to make peace between God and man; and this he did, by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross. Thereby he also made peace between man and man, and laid the

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foundations of lasting peace in each man's own conscience. Therefore it was, when he appeared, that the angels sang, *Glory to God in the highest: on earth peace and good-will to men*, Luke ii. 14. Therefore it was that our Saviour said as he departed out of the world, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, John xiv. 27. Therefore it was that the apostle said of him, *He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, so making peace*, Eph. ii. 14, 15.

The latter part of the prediction is still in process of fulfilment. *To him shall the gathering of the nations be.* Many nations have been gathered to him, and we have seen enough in our own times, to assure us, that our faith in the complete fulfilment of this promise, shall not be in vain. He who has watched the progress of gospel truth as it enlightened the minds of the Northern Greenlander, and the Southern Hottentot,—of the North American Indian, and Tahitian Islander, will be slow to believe that any nation will finally resist its power. Already is Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God. Already do careful observers note, that the hoary superstitions of India, are trembling on their time-marked foundations. The contest in China may be longer, for it is as yet just begun. But to him shall the gathering of the nations be, *Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim*, Is. xlix. 12.

Such is a cursory review of the prophecies concerning Christ, in the book of Genesis. After the fall of Adam, midnight gloom and darkness covered the world. You have watched the sky in a stormy night. You have seen the hour of deepest gloom, and have marked the gradual dispersion of the clouds. A faint star dimly glimmers amidst the fleeting vapors,—then another shines with steadier lustre—by degrees, a whole constellation shines forth, and, even while you looked, the morning star arose, and proclaimed the approach of day. It was thus in the first revelations of mercy to our race. The promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, was cheering, but still indistinct. The selection of Shem, and especially of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, made the purposes of God more and more clear; but the dying words of Israel, seemed almost to usher in the day. These prophecies prepared the way for the Levitical

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dispensation, with its clearer light, its frequent allusions to Christ, and its fuller revelations.

We judge, at times, of the greatness and importance of events, by the preparations that precede them. Were you to see a host of men assembled on some mountain's top, and anxiously looking towards the east; were you to see, further on, another body of men, preparing a highway among the mountains; were you to see, still beyond them, scouts placed in commanding positions, prepared to light the beacon fires, while all the population of the surrounding districts were in a state of heightened expectation, would you not suppose that some more than ordinarily interesting event was about to occur? Apply this comparison to the coming of Christ, and the religion he came to establish. What mean these varied preparations? Why this array of altars, and priests, and sacrifices? Why this long train of prophecy, commencing almost at the creation, and running on for near four thousand years, and all pointing to one common object? Why this expectation of the coming of some great one,—at first confined to a single nation, but gradually extending itself, until, as it were, the whole world stood in expectation to behold his arrival? There was reason for all this. The greatest event the earth ever saw, was about to occur,—the Lord of glory was about to appear in human form, and the work he came to accomplish was one in which all men are most deeply and personally interested. His mission was a mission of life or of death to every individual of our race, and therefore men eagerly expected his arrival. He has come. He has finished his work. He has bruised the serpent's head, and he has called the sons of Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem. A Prince of peace, already nations have been gathered to him; the sceptre has long since departed from Judah, but in him already hath the nations of the earth been blessed. In his name, we offer salvation to every man who hears the sound of the gospel. As his minister, I assure you, that whosoever comes unto him shall in no wise be cast out; and I solemnly, and with authority, declare unto you, that there is salvation in no other.

Let me, then, ask you—or rather, I would have you, seriously ask yourselves—have you sought and found salvation in him? The salvation he has procured is precisely suited to the wants of each individual before me. It is offered for your acceptance or

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rejection. Yet I should not say, "for your rejection." If you do not accept of it, if you do not heartily embrace it, to the exclusion of every other hope, then it is the same as though you had rejected. *How shall you escape, if you neglect this so great salvation?*

Macao, Aug. 6, 1843.

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SERMON XIII.

EMMANUEL. GOD WITH US.

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name *Emmanuel*, which being interpreted, is, *God with us*.—MAT. i. 23.

THE custom of giving significant names to their children, was one that prevailed in the Jewish nation from the earliest period of its history. The reasons which dictated the choice of the several names given to children, were, of course, very different. Sometimes they were given by the parents, to signify their gratitude for favors received, as when Leah called one of her sons *Judah*, or *praise*, saying, *Now will I praise the Lord*, Gen. xxix. 35. Sometimes they were given to express their faith in God for the bestowment of future blessings. Thus Rachel called the name of her first-born son *Joseph*, or *adding*, saying, as she gave the name, *The Lord shall add to me another son*, Gen. xxx. 24. Sometimes names were given to commemorate some remarkable event in a man's history, or to denote some distinguishing trait in his character. Thus Jacob's name was changed, after his wrestling with the angel, to *Israel*, a *prince of God. For as a prince hast thou power with God, and hast prevailed*, Gen. xxxii. 28.

It would be an interesting occupation to pursue this subject much farther, and to trace the various evidences of the gratitude, or faith, or zeal of Hebrew parents, expressed in the names given to their children, but at present it is unnecessary. It is sufficient to remark, that a custom, so universal, would not probably be omitted in the case of one so long foretold, and of whom such great things were expected, as of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. We naturally, therefore, feel much curiosity to know both the names, and the meaning of the names, given to him. The name in the text is one that seems to call for special notice, both from the person who foretold it, and the person who explains

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it, as well as from the surpassing dignity and excellence of Him who bears it, *Emmanuel!* Thus the inspired prophet, more than seven hundred years before his birth, predicts that he shall be called. *God with us!* Thus the inspired evangelist, recording the fulfilment of the prophecy, interprets the name.

There seem to be two great truths intended to be taught by this name. The first is that he who bears it, is a Being very far superior to the generality of those who are born upon the earth. *God with us!* There is a majesty in this name, especially when we compare it with other divine declarations concerning the person thus called, which induces us to say, that he was no common man, but that in some mysterious way, the divine and human natures were united in his one person. He is God, and yet man. Infinitely exalted above us, and yet partaking of our nature. Before all things, yet born in *the latter days.* An object of worship to all angels, yet appearing in the form of a servant. He is truly *God with us.*

That the same being should possess both the divine and human natures in one person; that he should be both God and man, is a doctrine almost too wonderful for belief. It is so far above the comprehension of our limited minds, that we cannot grasp it; and he who has never been astonished, when the thought rose upon his mind, "the infinite and eternal God, veiled for a time his glory and dwelt among men, in human form," has never justly apprehended the truth we speak of. How can it be otherwise than astonishing? Look at these bodies of ours. Consider their feebleness and imperfections. Consider their weaknesses, how we are tied down to the narrow limits of this world, and fatigued by efforts to traverse even a small portion of its surface. Then lift your eyes to the starry firmament above, and when your wearied imagination returns confounded from the effort to count the number of those worlds, so far beyond our reach, think, "The God that made all those worlds, and at whose feet they lie, like golden sands, took our nature upon him, and bore about a body like our own!" It is hardly wonderful, when these thoughts press upon the mind, that some have even doubted whether this could be so. It seems too great a condescension for such a being to descend so low. Certain it is, we never should dare to entertain such a thought, without the strongest authority for it. But if we have the word of that very being himself assuring us that this doctrine is true, then it is not the part either of

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reason, or modesty, much less of religion, to doubt it. It is then our duty to make reason bow before that which rises above her comprehension, and suffer faith to rest upon that which our Maker reveals.

What saith the Scripture on this point?—for it is the word of God alone that can decide it. Without quoting the tenth part of the passages in the Bible which refer to this subject, let me refer you to the declaration of Isaiah. *To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*, Is. ix. 6. To the same effect speaks the apostle John, *This is the true God and eternal life*, 1 John v. 20. Still more clearly does the apostle Paul give us his testimony, *Who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, Phil. ii. 6–8. But clear as these declarations are, they are not more clear than the words of Christ himself. Standing in the presence of those who were ever ready to accuse him, and to work his ruin, and who were peculiarly sensitive on the doctrine of the infinite superiority of their God to all other beings, he said, *I and my Father are one*, John x. 30. And on another occasion, though he knew that his hearers would be immediately reminded of the name that God had expressly appropriated to himself, *I am that I am*, Ex. iii. 14, he declared in the most emphatic manner, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am*, John viii. 58.

The same truth is also distinctly shown by his actions. Follow him on that memorable day, when, after taking our infirmities and healing our sicknesses, after instructing the people, and relieving their distresses till nature was exhausted, he entered into a ship to go to other places. *Behold there arose a great tempest, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves.* Where now was Jesus? Asleep, in the hinder part of the ship! Does this Being, overcome with fatigue, and needing the repose of sleep, like other men, possess powers such as other men do not? His disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, *Lord, save us, we perish! And he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm*, Matt. viii. 23–26. As man he was overcome with fatigue—as God he ruled the raging elements.

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Follow him in another of his journeys. He comes to the well of Jacob, at Samaria. Being *wearied with his journey, he sat thus on the well.* A woman came to the well, with whom he enters into conversation, and in that conversation tells her even the thoughts of her own heart, and the past actions of her life. In her astonishment she exclaims, *Come see a man that told me all that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* John iv. In that wearied being who sat upon the well, we recognize one who partakes of our own feeble nature,—but in his searching of that woman's heart, and declaring to her all that ever she did, we behold unequivocal proofs of that Being who alone *searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men*, Jer. xvii. 10. It is God's prerogative to search the heart, and the volume that is concealed from all created eyes, and often scarcely read even by its owner, *is naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*, Heb. v. 12, for there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight. Follow him once again to the grave of Lazarus, and as you see him weeping over the tomb of the friend he loved, you must acknowledge that human sympathies beat in that affectionate bosom. But when he calls, *Lazarus, come forth,* and the dead man hears his voice, and obeys, we bow in solemn reverence at the presence of him *who has the keys of hell and of death*, Rev. i. 18, *to whom belong the issues from death,* Ps. lxviii. 20, who alone *kills, and makes alive*, Deut. xxxii. 39. Well therefore does a being of whom these things are true, bear the name Emmanuel—GOD WITH US.

2. The doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, however, though very distinctly referred to in the name Emmanuel, is not the only thing which it was intended to teach. That doctrine lies at the foundation of all the instruction and consolation we may derive from the name,—but the principal truth which we are taught by it, and the one to which I wish to call your special attention, is this, that *Jesus Christ is with his people, in a peculiar manner for their good.* Believing as we do that Jesus Christ is God, he is of course everywhere, and is present with all his creatures. Exercising the providential government of the world, he feeds and clothes them all, and directs all their movements, and therefore in a general sense, all men may say, that Christ is with them. But this is not what is taught by the name Emmanuel. There is a special way in which he is present with those who are redeemed by him, and I request your attention to some

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further remarks, on the manner in which, and the reasons for which this presence of Christ with his people is shown.

1. Christ is present with his people *in the dispensations of Providence.* As God he is everywhere, and his general providence extends to all his creatures without exception. But this is not all that the Scriptures teach respecting the Providence of God. We are expressly informed that Jesus Christ exercises the providential government of the world, not only in virtue of his divine nature, but also in *virtue of his office as mediator between God and man.* After he had finished the work of redemption, *All power in heaven and earth was given unto him,* Matt. xxviii. 18, and he was constituted *head over all things to the church,* Eph. i. 22, i. e. for the benefit of the church. Exalted thus, *far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come,* Eph. i. 21, and with *all things under his feet,* he has a special care over his church, and directs all events with reference to her. Thus *everything shall work together for good to them that love God,* Rom. viii. 28. It is this which gives us our confidence in the safety of his people, and the ultimate triumph of true religion in our world. He who for his people's sake, once suffered the loss of all things, now rules over all things by a double right, and it cannot be supposed, that he will not direct those things for his people's good. The outward appearance of things may oftentimes be dark. I need not say they may be so—they will be so, for he himself has so informed us. The enemies of our holy religion at times may triumph in our supposed defeat, and our own hearts may sink in despondency at the disappointment of fondly cherished hopes. But this arises from our own want of faith, and because we cannot see the end from the beginning. Could we but look beyond second causes and see the operations of the Providence of God, we should find that all these apparently disastrous events, are still under his control. It cannot be otherwise. There is not an event that occurs, however great, or however small, be it the rise of an empire or the fall of a sparrow—there is not an evil counsel of the enemies of the church, or even of Satan himself, that is not seen by the eye, and controlled by the hand of Emmanuel. Good shall come out of evil therefore, and light out of darkness. And while this is true of the church generally, it is true of each member of that church,—for he who in the agonies of a world's redemption could care for a mother's

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support, John xix. 26, 27,—amidst the cares (though they are no cares to him) of the church's preservation, will not forget the wants of the meanest of his followers. Scorn and contempt may cover you here,—but he who said, *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother*, Matt. xii. 50,—is not forgetful of that relationship, now when seated on his high and glorious throne; and in the best way, and at the most proper season, will he exert his authority for your deliverance and support. As long therefore as the Christian can say, that his Saviour's name is Emmanuel, he may join with the Psalmist in singing *the Lord reigneth. Let the earth rejoice*, the nations may rage, but he is secure, and shall laugh at all their efforts, and malice.

2. Christ is also present with his people by the influences of his Holy Spirit. If there is anything that distinguishes the Christian dispensation, from the Jewish and the Patriarchal, and that marks its superiority above all other forms of religion, it is that part of it which refers to the operations of the Holy Spirit. True, there is commonly but little known, or said even in the church itself, concerning the Spirit, but it is the shame of the church that such is the case. Before the coming of Christ, but little was revealed, and therefore but little was known concerning the nature or the operations of the Spirit. His influences were, indeed, felt, for without them there could be no church,—but compared with their greater diffusion, after the crucifixion of our Lord, they are almost overlooked. It is even said, *The Spirit was not given because Christ was not glorified*, John vii. 39. But after his resurrection the Spirit was given, and great signs and wonders immediately followed. His first coming was distinguished by wonderful gifts, the speaking with tongues, the healing of diseases, the raising of the dead, and various other supernatural operations. But along with these, and far superior to them in importance, as well as in permanence were those other operations of the Spirit, which continue to our time, and shall last to the end of the world. These are those secret and mysterious influences which come over the souls of men, arousing them to concern for their spiritual welfare; awakening them to a sense of the danger of their natural condition; and of their sinfulness before God; leading them away from all confidence in themselves, to an humble and unreserved trust in Christ alone, for salvation; showing them his excellency; opening their minds to

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a right understanding of the Holy Scriptures; causing them to mortify sin, and to seek after holiness; sustaining them in trials; strengthening them against temptations; fitting them for usefulness, and finally bringing them safe into the heavenly kingdom prepared for those that truly love God. All these things worketh that one, and the self-same Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 11. Now the doctrine of the Scriptures is, that these influences, so precious, so indispensable to our salvation, are procured for us only by the death of Christ, and made available and continued to us only by his all-prevalent intercession. The influences of the Spirit are purchased for us by the agonies Christ endured upon the cross, they are sent to us in virtue of his prayers; their sole object is to lead us to him; and to the enjoyment of his salvation. Hence for these three reasons the Holy Spirit is frequently called the *Spirit of Christ*, and to show the necessity of his influences, we are told that *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. Nay, so great was the value that Christ himself attached to the coming of the Spirit, that he taught his disciples to consider it as more necessary than his own bodily presence, *It is expedient for you*, said he, *that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you*, John xvi. 7. How glorious and excellent must that Spirit be, who is able to supply the want of Christ's bodily presence on the earth! The Spirit of Christ is, in a sense, the soul of the church on earth, and the body would soon be dissolved and decay, if the Spirit were wanting. This is the reason why the church has not been long since totally destroyed. The efforts of man may harass the body, but the Spirit is beyond their reach, and wherever a single member of the church is found, there the Spirit dwells, and against a Being so Godlike and divine, the gates of hell may rage, but they can never prevail. I know that men may laugh, and say that it is all fanaticism, or enthusiasm, to talk of these secret and mysterious influences—but Christ thought not so, when he said, *The Spirit of Truth shall guide you into all truth: he shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.* Nay, to show his sense of the infinite importance of this promise, he immediately repeated it, in yet more emphatic language, *All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you*, John xvi. 13–15.

3. There is yet a third mode in which Jesus Christ is present

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with his people, and that is, by his own personal presence. As God, he is of course everywhere present, and we may well suppose that he will be in a peculiar manner with those who are redeemed by his own blood, sanctified by his own Spirit, and upheld by his own peculiar providence. A father delights to be with his children, and a friend with the friend of his heart; and it cannot be that one who loves others, as Christ loves his own people, should consent to be absent from them. Accordingly, this presence of Christ with his followers is spoken of in all parts of the Scriptures, as common in all ages, and in all places. From the numerous passages in which it is referred to, I select only a few. He was with the ancient patriarchs in all their sojournings in strange lands. It was he who said to Abraham, *Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward*, Gen. xv. 1. It was he who appeared in that glorious vision to Jacob, as he slept upon the ground, with a stone for his pillow, and said, *Behold! I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, I will not leave thee*, Gen. xxviii. 15. It was he who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and sending him to the court of Pharaoh, calmed his fears and inspired him with courage, by saying, *Certainly, I will be with thee*, Exod. iii. 12. The apostle informs us of his presence with the Israelitish nation, in all their long and weary wanderings, *They did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ*, 1 Cor. x. 4. The types and ceremonies of the Jewish dispensation, were all emblematical of Christ, and many a pious worshipper as he bowed his head when the smoke of the evening sacrifice went up, experienced the presence of Him who is *the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever*, Heb. xiii. 8. Not to mention other examples we may refer to David, to whom such clear revelations were made, concerning the future coming of the Messiah. His soul dwelt upon the anticipation of this, as *all his salvation, and all his desire*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, and when, in the sweetest strain of poetry and of piety he says, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me*, Ps. xxiii.

For awhile he dwelt upon the earth in human form, and his disciples conversed with him face to face. They *saw his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*, John i. 14. They

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rejoiced in his presence, though there were times when the glory of the Godhead shone so brightly in him, that they almost feared to approach him. But he is not now on earth, as to his bodily presence. Nor is it needful. The Spirit supplies the want of his bodily presence, and there is still that mystical union between him and all his people, that makes them one. Think not, that though his glorified body is in heaven, he himself is away. The members of his church are the branches, and he is the vine, and it is owing to their union with him that they grow and bear fruit, John xv. 1. The members of his church are members of his body, while he is their head, Eph. iv. 15. They are living stones in that temple of which he is the chief corner-stone, Eph. ii. 20. There is a union between him and his people which no created power can destroy, and from that union they derive life and happiness and strength. That union is a perpetual one. It is remarkable that one of the first circumstances recorded of the life of Christ, is that his name is *Emmanuel, God with us*, while his own last words on earth were, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. Nor does it stop even when the world is ended, for he has told us, and his apostles have repeated the declaration, that we shall be EVER WITH THE LORD, John xvii. 24; 1 Thes. iv. 17.

We may well pause here, and inquire, Can these things be really true? Why is this wonderful display of the presence of the uncreated Son of God? It was a truth which nature taught the ancient heathen, "Never introduce a God, but where a God is needed." But here the Son of God frequently appears, nay, is constantly present, and that not with equals, for he has no equals, not even with the highest rank of created beings,—but he is represented as condescending to our low estate, and holding communion near and intimate with worms of the dust. Again we repeat, why is all this? Why this almost prodigal display of the riches of the presence and grace of the Godhead? What great objects are subserved by these wonderful and varied manifestations of the King of the universe? Say not that it is prodigality,—say not that it is ostentation,—say not that it is unneeded—For us it is vitally important, for our salvation it is essential.

We are ignorant creatures. Naturally ignorant of the very first principles of religion; of our own true character; of the evil nature of sin; of God's holiness, and of our danger—and in addition to this natural blindness, there is a superadded darkness,

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for the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not. If this ignorance be not removed, there is no possibility of our salvation. If a man knows not that he is in danger, he will make no efforts to escape. But who shall enlighten us? That mere human reason can do it, is impossible; the experience of the world, in all ages, has shown it to be out of the question. Go no farther than your own doors for proof. On every side, you shall see the men of the greatest and most ancient nation on earth, ignorant of the first principles of religion, and hoping to secure their safety beyond the grave, by worshipping the bones of their ancestors. We need *a teacher come from God*, to enlighten us, one who shall have power to remove the scales that dim our mental sight, and place spiritual things before our eyes, and command our attention to them. Such a teacher we find only in the Son of God. But we are not only ignorant, we are also sinful and condemned, and exposed to the wrath of God. We need a Saviour, who can bear our sins, and take away the punishment due to them, and bring us off free and unharmed, when the insulted justice of God cries aloud for redress. From such an undertaking, all created strength shrinks back appalled. But God has laid help for us upon one *mighty to save*, and the reason why Christ was made flesh, and dwelt among us, was, that he might deliver those who trust in him from the wrath of God. This work he accomplished, because he is *Emmanuel, God with us*. But not only are we ignorant, and therefore in need of divine instruction,—and guilty, and therefore needing to have our sins atoned for, and pardoned—we are also full of sin, and need to be sanctified, and restored to the image of God, before we can be received again into his presence. This is no easy work. He who alone knows the heart, has declared that it is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9; and though we are naturally loth to believe such a declaration concerning ourselves, yet the proofs of it so stare us in the face on every side, that, in one form or other, we are forced to confess its truth. Let any man make the effort to lead a perfectly holy life. Be not satisfied with mere departure from overt acts of wickedness,—avoid the least sin, not only of action, but of words. Let no unkind expression, even, proceed from your mouth. Guard your heart with all diligence, and let no evil, no impure, no unhallowed thought, ever rise there. No matter how great the temptation, or how strong the provocation, let it be your object to bear everything, as Christ himself would

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have borne it. Which of you, after making such an experiment for a single day, could say, "I am perfect, I have not sinned?" Ah, no! You cannot, you dare not, thus speak. Evil dwells in the heart of the children of men, and the holiest of men have ever felt most deeply its power over them. Paul, in the bitterness of his heart, cried out, *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. He himself could not do it, and his experience has been felt by every Christian, down to the present time. It is in this respect, that we specially need the presence of our Saviour. He it is who enables us to contend against the evils of our own hearts, and the allurements of the world, and the fiery darts of Satan. The victory is often doubtful, and the battle sore, and we sometimes receive wounds that we carry with us to the grave; but none, that depend upon him, shall be finally overcome. By the guidance of his providence, by the influence of his Spirit, by the secret, but all-powerful efficacy of his own presence, he sustains the Christian, bears him on, gives him courage and consolation, brings good to him out of evil, puts his enemies to flight, and gives him a final and complete victory over sin, the world, and the devil. It is for this object that he displays so much of his presence, for it is his presence alone that can accomplish it; and who will say that it is not a sufficient object to require his presence?

This presence of Christ accompanies the believer through life, and crowns the felicity of his heavenly inheritance. Among all the notes of joy that swell the anthems of the redeemed in heaven, few, if any, are higher than the strain, the burden of which is, *Emmanuel, God with us.*

From the various practical inferences which this subject teaches us, I select only the following:—

1. We learn, hence, the necessity of a deep reverence for Christ, and of habitual seriousness of deportment. We are all in danger of falling into two errors, in our views of the Saviour of the world. Either we think so little about him, that we have no definite ideas respecting his character and works, and are but seldom sensible of his presence; or else we think too lightly of him, and regard him with too much familiarity. Either of these views is exceedingly erroneous. If he be so constantly with us, as has been shown, then, surely, ought we to be at pains to acquaint ourselves with him, to know who, and what he is, who thus manifests himself to us. To this we are the more incited, because we

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are informed, that *to know him, is eternal life*, John xvii. 3. We cannot well have too many thoughts of Christ, for such a friend deserves our warmest and most frequent remembrances. Yet, while you think of him with frequency and affection, beware of low views of his character, or unbecoming deportment in his presence. It is true, he has greatly condescended in thus coming down to our condition; but still he is *God over all, blessed forever*, Rom. ix. 5, and you cannot too deeply reverence him. And if he be thus constantly present with you, how can you possibly maintain a light and trifling deportment before him? We rise up before the hoary head, and show reverence to them that are placed in authority over us; and shall we show less to the great Ancient of days, who is also *King of kings, and Lord of lords.* I do not recommend moroseness, I do not recommend sadness. On the contrary, the *joy of the Lord is your strength*, Neh. viii. 10; but there is a seriousness, and sobriety, and dignity, that well becomes the ministers and constant companions of so great a monarch.

Again, we are taught by the truths just now presented to feel the highest esteem for the church of Christ, and for all the members of that church. It may be confidently asserted that there is no body on earth so truly honorable, or worthy of respect, as the Christian church. This is not the common opinion of mankind, but it is nevertheless true. What is it that constitutes dignity, or gives a claim to honor? Is it not their acquisition of knowledge, and power, and virtue—the possession of riches, and the favor and friendship of the good and the great? And what assemblage is so richly endowed with these as the church? Constantly sustained by the favor and friendship of the Eternal Son of God, having his presence constantly with her; receiving from him the true riches which the world knows not, and the true knowledge—even that which leads to eternal life and happiness. *She is all glorious within, and her clothing is of wrought gold*, Ps. xlv. 13. *She looketh forth as the morning, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners*, Cant. 6. 10. Let the world esteem her as they may, the Christian may well say, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joy*, Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

Finally. This subject affords us an excellent test of Christian character. The proper application of it will enable you to dis-

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cover both whether you really possess the grace of Christ in your heart, and whether it is growing and flourishing there. Such a being cannot be with any of our race in such diversified ways, as Christ is with his people, without producing most sensible effects, and changes in their characters and conduct. Is he thus with you? Remember, if you expect to spend an eternity with him, that union must commence before the end of time. As death leaves you, so will eternity find you, and so will you continue. Do you then feel the presence of Christ with you? Are you sensible of the influences of the Spirit working upon your heart and affections? Do you feel yourself under the power of new motives, and those motives such as have reference mainly to the kingdom of God? Do you delight in the thoughts of Christ? Is it pleasant to you to recognize his image in others, and to cherish it in yourselves? What influence is produced both upon your heart and your life by this constant presence of the Saviour? If you are really one of his people, whom he has deigned to take into such near union with himself, you will greatly delight to think of him; you will long to feel his presence more sensibly, and more constantly; and you will make it the great business of your life to become like him. Said an excellent Christian once to me, "Ever since I knew anything of religion, I have made it my daily prayer, that I might know more of Christ." I knew that Christian well, and could distinctly mark the benefit he received from such a course. Be it your study also, my hearers, to learn the character of Christ, and to feel his presence with you constantly. So shall you realize more and more the excellency there is in this glorious name, *Emmanuel, God with us.*

Macao, August 20, 1843.

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SERMON XIV.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SABBATH.

And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said. To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord; to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days shall ye gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.—Exodus xvi. 22–30.

The giving of manna to the Israelites in the wilderness was not one miracle, but many. The creation of such a substance, and its falling at the early morning hour; its melting in the sun, yet remaining hard in the tents; its corrupting if kept over night, and yet remaining uncorrupted in the golden pot for a thousand years; its falling for forty years, and yet ceasing on the very day when no longer needed—all were miracles, any one of which would have formed an era in the history of any other nation. There was another circumstance connected with it equally miraculous. The manna fell every day, and the people gathered the portion of each day in its day; but this general rule had one exception. It fell six days in the week, but not on the seventh; and to provide for the wants of the seventh, a double quantity fell, and was gathered on the preceding day. But here a difficulty arose. When the manna first fell, an order was given that none should keep it over night, and those who transgressed, found

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to their confusion, that it bred worms and became loathsome. Another miracle was needed, and the general law, that if kept it should corrupt, was suspended during one day in seven, so that the manna gathered on the sixth day remained sweet and good upon the seventh. Thus the miracle itself had its miraculous exceptions. The reason for these superadded miracles is found in the fact, that the seventh day was a Sabbath unto the Lord, in which no servile work was allowed to be done. It was a day of rest, holy unto the Lord, and rather than suffer that rest to be broken by even the necessary avocations of life, or ordinary affairs to interfere with his more immediate service, he would interrupt the laws of his own miracles, and suspend the rules himself had imposed upon them. There is nothing in this account leading us to suppose that the Sabbath was now first observed. It is spoken of as an institution long well-known, and one, the duty of observing which, was commonly acknowledged. To these two points I request your serious attention.

I. *The early history of the Sabbath day.*

There are many who suppose the institution of the Sabbath day to be a mere Jewish rite, appointed at Sinai, intended only for the Jews, and abolished with the other Levitical laws, upon the death of Christ; and that consequently it need not be observed at all, and certainly not in its strictness, by those who live under the Christian dispensation. But the Sabbath was no mere Jewish rite. In the words of our Saviour, *the Sabbath was made for man.* It was instituted at the creation of the world. It was embodied in the moral law, and proclaimed in thunder from Mount Sinai, and it was sanctioned and sanctified by the example and the resurrection of the Son of Man, who was Lord of the Sabbath day.

The rest of the seventh day is first mentioned in the account of the creation. Six days did God labor. He spake, and on successive days the light, the blue expanse, the earth and seas and vegetable life, the sun and moon, the inhabitants of the deep and of the air, and last of all, the living creatures of the earth, and man appeared, and took their stations in the new-formed world. *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made,*

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Gen. ii. 1–3. That God rested from labor through weariness cannot be supposed: the rest here spoken of must therefore be a holy resting from employment, and a blessed contemplation of the works he had made. God kept the Sabbath day, and his example, and his blessing and sanctifying, or setting apart, the seventh day, was that men might do the same. So it was understood by all men both before and after the deluge. Of this a sufficient proof is found in the early and universal division of time into weeks, and in the sacred regard that was paid to the number seven. Thus Noah went into the ark, and *after seven days, the flood came*, Gen. vii. 10. When the flood abated, Noah sent forth a dove, and after she returned, finding no place to rest, *he stayed seven days and again he sent her forth*, Gen. viii. 10. She returned with an olive leaf, and again *he stayed other seven days* and sent her forth, Gen. viii. 12. In the history of Jacob the Sabbath is referred to. Seven years he served Laban for Rachel, but by deception Leah was given to him. When he complained of the fraud, Laban said, *Fulfil her week also, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me, yet other seven years*, Gen. xxix. 27.

The universal use of seven as a sacred number can be explained only by the fact that time was commonly divided into periods of seven days by the Sabbath. Cain was to be avenged seven-fold, Gen. iv. 15. Noah took clean beasts by sevens, Gen. vii. 2. When Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech, he did it with seven ewe lambs, Gen. xxi. 29. Pharaoh's double vision of kine and of the ears of corn appeared to him by sevens, and was followed by seven years of plenty, and seven years of famine. The Hebrew word for an oath, one of their most sacred acts of religion, is derived from the word seven. Not only with the Hebrews is the number seven and the seventh day, sacred. It is so also with the Egyptians, Arabians, and Persians; and from Egypt it came to Greece, and Homer and Hesiod speak of "the sacred seventh day" (ἑβδομον ἱερον ἡμαρ).

The history of the manna in the desert is a perfect proof that the Sabbath was observed before the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. The manna fell in the desert of Sin, a full month before Israel came to Sinai, but none fell on the seventh day, nor were the people allowed on that day to seek it in the field. Why? Because some new law was then made known? By no means. *To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord*, Ex. xvi. 23.

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The seventh day is the Sabbath, v. 26. *So the people rested the seventh day*, v. 30. All this shows the Sabbath to be an institution known long before that time.

The law given from Sinai, was not intended merely for the Jews. With the ritual observances afterwards promulgated, other nations have little to do; but the ten commandments are only a transcript of what was at first written on the human heart; they form a summary of the moral law, which every son of Adam is sacredly bound to obey, and whose obligation is permanent as the world itself. Yet among those universal laws none stands out with greater prominence, none is more carefully guarded, none enforced with so many reasons. *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work: thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it*, Exod. xx. 9–11. Remember the Sabbath,—then it must have been previously appointed, and already known.

Nor was it abolished at the death of Christ. The New Testament contains no record, and gives no hint of any such abolition. Christ came to bring the Levitical law to an end, but the Sabbath is part of that moral law, which he came not to destroy, but to confirm. He rescued it from the false glosses of the Jews, distinctly proclaiming that works of necessity and works of mercy were lawful on that day; but he left its sanctions unimpaired, and his own example, and that of all his followers, shows with abundant clearness that the day was still holy to the Lord, Acts xx. 7, 1 Cor. xvi. 2, Rev. i. 10, John xx. 19, 26. In commemoration of his return from the grave, its observance was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, and it has since been sacredly kept by the Christian Church. It is therefore most manifest that the Sabbath is for all men, without distinction of nation or time. This is seen

1. In its original appointment at the creation of the world.
2. In its prominent place in the moral law.
3. In the example of all holy men, before and after Moses, of Christ himself, and his apostles, and of the Christian Church.
4. In the numerous and express precepts and allusions of the

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Scriptures, which separate it widely from the merely ritual observances that were only a shadow of things to come.

Has the Sabbath day been thus set apart and made binding on all men? It becomes then a question of chief importance, How is it to be sanctified? What duties are incumbent on us as to its observance? On this point there is a general and most melancholy ignorance or neglect of duty, and in many cases an open profanation of the law of God.

What is the object of the Sabbath day? It is first to give man a time of rest and relaxation. The business of the world requires much time, and with hearts like ours, ever prone to the earth, and longing after its enjoyments, there is too much probability of being completely engrossed in the things around us, to the exclusion and forgetfulness of the higher ends of our being. The Sabbath comes in to draw off the mind from the world; to allow our overtasked and wearied intellects season for repose and renewal; to invigorate our souls with influences from above, that shall prevent the world from gaining undue influence, and finally dragging us exhausted to destruction.

But it is not merely a time of repose. It is also intended as a time for specially serving God and preparing for that world, where one eternal Sabbath reigns. Many complain that they have no time to serve God; that the needful business of this world prevents attention to the claims of another. Vain and foolish complaints! The Sabbath is given expressly for these purposes. If there were no Sabbath there would be room for complaint, for it would soon be found that the world had wormed itself into every thought, and engrossed the heart and every affection with itself, leaving neither time nor inclination for things that last when the earth shall be dissolved. But this danger was foreseen by our Creator, and a guard set against it in the weekly return of the Sabbath day.

To the Law and the Testimony.—Examine carefully the word of God, and say honestly what its requirements are. One day in seven is to be sanctified, or set apart to the service of God. It is the whole day that is to be kept holy. The command is not, *Remember the Sabbath morning, or the Sabbath noon*, but *Remember the Sabbath day.* The whole day is to be sanctified by a holy rest from all employments and recreations, not excepting those that are lawful on other days. It is difficult to conceive how anything can be more explicit than the words of the command,

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Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work. You are neither to work yourselves, nor are you to allow, much less to require those under your control to work. Neither your children, nor your servants, nor your guests are to profane the day. *Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.* The command is especially addressed to governors of families,—who are too apt, though they work not themselves, to require, or at least to allow those under them to work. The only exceptions, are works of necessity and of mercy. Christ allowed his hungry disciples to pluck the corn on the Sabbath and eat, to lead their cattle to water, to rescue animals in distress, and relieve the maladies of the diseased—these were works of necessity and mercy.

While working is to be avoided, we are required on the Sabbath day, to spend the whole time not occupied in works on that day allowed, in the public and private or social exercises of God's worship. This we learn from the example of Christ, *who, as his custom was, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read,* Luke iv. 16; and of the apostles who did the same, Acts xiii. 14, xxii. 2, 1 Cor. xvi. 2; and also from the precepts of the Bible, which command, *Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work: but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your forefathers,* Jer. xvii. 21, 22.

There are many who will complain of all this as a hard rule, and unnecessarily strict. My answer to all such complaints is, *Thus saith the Lord.* If it can be shown from the Scriptures, that what has been advanced is not the mind of the Lord, being either contrary to it, or going beyond it, then there will be room for complaint, and license to neglect. But if I have rightly expounded the Scriptures on this point, then the question lies between you and your Maker. Will you obey and secure his blessing,—or will you disobey and incur the consequences? Before you answer, consider the reasons that God has condescended to give for the observance of the Sabbath day. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it; God allowing us six days out of seven for our own affairs and reserving but one for himself; from God's challenging a special propriety in the seventh, *It is the*

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Sabbath of the Lord thy God; from the example of God, who labored six days and rested the seventh; and from that blessing of God which he put on that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to ourselves, in our sanctifying it. How many examples might be adduced in confirmation of these reasons! Volumes might be written detailing the rewards that have followed a careful observance of the day, and the judgments that have visited those who dared to transgress. Hear the testimony of Sir Matthew Hale, after fifty years' experience: "Whenever I have undertaken any secular business on the Lord's day, which was not absolutely and indispensably necessary, that business never prospered and succeeded well with me. Always the more closely I applied myself to the duties of the Lord's day, the more happy and successful were my business and employments, the rest of the week following." Who ever performed more labor than Wilberforce? His own recorded opinion is that he could not have accomplished so much business, but for the rest of the Sabbath; he went down to his grave in peace, and in a good old age, while many who began their course with him, ended their lives prematurely, or became maniacs and self-destroyers. Did space permit, an array of facts could be presented showing conclusively that even as it regards this world, those who observe the Sabbath are more prosperous than those who do not. It would be easy to prove that nine tenths of the criminals in the prisons of nominally Christian lands were Sabbath-breakers. The testimony of physicians would show that the rest of the Sabbath is as necessary for the body as it is for the soul. The testimony of disinterested men would show that a large proportion of merchants who have failed in business were Sabbath-breakers. I know there are some splendid exceptions to this remark, and these are commonly pointed to by those who would justify themselves, not knowing, or not caring to know, that these are mere exceptions, shining lighthouses built upon the quicksands, which, while in danger of being swallowed up themselves, lure the unwary mariner to destruction.

Such is a brief history of the Sabbath day, of the duties it requires, and of the reasons by which its observance is enforced; and all who profess the Christian name are bound to show cause why they do not so regard it. It is so interwoven with the whole spirit of Christianity, as to be inseparable from it: and I do not

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scruple to say that the man who wilfully and habitually disregards the Sabbath day, will also, if he supposes his interests require it, disregard every other requisition of the religion of Christ. How then is the Sabbath day regarded by the Protestant community in China? I ask this question and contemplate its answer, not without anxiety; but it is a subject on which the truth must be spoken, and plainly spoken. As a minister of the kingdom of Christ, it is my duty to declare the laws of that kingdom; and my commission empowers me *to speak, to exhort, and to rebuke with all authority*, Tit. ii. 15. On this point at least I will clear my skirts of guilt. In general, the Sabbath day is grossly desecrated by the professedly Christian community of China. From the highest authority downwards, it is almost as if there were no such day, and even of those who pay an outward respect to it, there are few indeed who obey the spirit of its requisitions. Is this a sweeping charge? It may be, but it is as true as it is sweeping. The English government has, by law, established the Christian religion, and every officer of that government is bound by his oath of office to sustain that religion. Have they done so in China? What means this frequent violation of the Sabbath by the performance of public official acts upon that day? Why, when the supplementary treaty between England and China was lately signed, was the Sabbath day selected for that purpose, with all its parade by water and by land? In war some excuse might be imagined for working on the Sabbath, but in peace, there is none. It has been said that that day was chosen in accordance with the wishes of the Chinese commissioner. But can it be supposed that he chose that day because it was the Christian Sabbath? Can it be supposed that while professing friendship and a desire for peace, he sought to insult us by requiring us to violate the commands of our Creator? It cannot be supposed. Keying is a gentleman, and as such, the slightest hint that that day was consecrated to the service of God, and could not lawfully be spent in such a way, would have been amply sufficient to induce him to select another day. I might refer to other public acts, but let me ask why were the mails for Bombay closed at Hong Kong, at 5 o'clock, P.M. on Sabbath, Dec. 24? Was not this requiring the foreign community there to spend that day in their counting-houses? What imminent crisis in public affairs prevented the mails from being closed twenty-four hours sooner, or twenty-four hours later? Some may think it improper thus publicly to notice these things, but

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as the public acts of public men are public property, it is not improper to make them matters of public remark. And what, I would ask, must the heathen around us think of our regard for our religion, when its most sacred precepts are openly, and needlessly set at naught, by those high in authority, and solemnly bound to observe them?

If the Sabbath is disregarded by the public authorities, is it better honored by private individuals? I grieve to say no. In one or other of the following ways, I charge the foreign community in China with neglecting or profaning the day. Those whose consciences acquit them of the charges, will not suppose that I refer to them.

1. It is made a day for the transaction of ordinary business. There are those who go regularly to their counting-houses on the Sabbath day. There are those who settle their accounts upon that day. There are those who bring up the arrears of their correspondence on that day. There are many who do all this regularly, but there are few indeed who scruple, if they are slightly pressed with business, to employ some of the hours of the sacred day. If a ship comes in on the Sabbath, who is there that hesitates to read his business letters, and speculate on their contents, and make arrangements for the week ensuing? Who is there that hesitates to despatch a ship on the Sabbath day? The practice of despatching ships on the Lord's day, is exceedingly common. More vessels sail from this port on the Sabbath day, than any other day in the week, and yet what advantage is gained by it? What difference does it make in ordinary cases, whether a ship is twenty-four hours sooner or later in starting, if she has a month at least or four months for her voyage? It is said that there is not much labor in getting a ship under weigh, and as she must sail on the Sabbath, when once started, why not start on that day? This is not a correct statement. There is a great deal of labor in the starting of a vessel; there are a hundred things to be done, and the day on which she sails is seldom or never a day of rest to the officers or men. And what right has any man to require a whole ship's crew to give up the privileges of the Sabbath, that he may put a few more dollars in his pocket? I know it is said by some, that ship captains prefer starting on the Sabbath, but I doubt this. I once asked a captain of a vessel, why he sailed on the Sabbath? It was a disagreeable question. At first he remarked, as is so commonly done, "The better day the better deed." A more

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wicked remark can hardly be made, for if it be true, then the man who stabs his brother on the Sabbath, is a good man! At last he said, "I did not want to do it, but my owners told me to start, and what could I do? A sailor is not his own master." The owners of that vessel have failed in business. Another captain told me not long since, that he did not wish to work on the Sabbath, but he had express orders to keep his men constantly employed, and to give out goods on the Sabbath day, as on every other day. I happen to know, that the owners of that vessel, suffered a dead loss of several thousands of dollars by that voyage. It is a fearful thing to act in opposition to the Almighty. He who holds the winds in his fists, and the waters in the hollow of his hands can easily blast the riches you acquire, or hope to gain by violating his ordinances. And I say emphatically, you have no right to do so. God says, *Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.* Can language be clearer than this?

2. There are some who do not labor themselves upon the Lord's day, aad yet make no scruple of keeping their clerks, and especially their Chinese servants and workmen, busy on that day. This custom is almost universal, and one cannot go through a street in Macao or Hong Kong on the Sabbath days without seeing companies of men building houses, making roads, packing boxes, and carrying goods; and for whom? For English and American Protestants, who profess to receive the Bible as the word of God, and to be called by the name of Christ! I was once called to visit a sick man on the Sabbath day, and going to the house where he lay a dying, I had to make my way through a number of men in the employ of the Christian owner of the house, nailing boxes before the window of his room! You think there is no harm in this, because they are heathen, and would work for others or themselves on that day, if not for you. I do not see the force of this excuse. They are your servants, and under your control, and the command of God is, *Thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy man-servant nor thy maid-servant.* What right have you to say, They are heathens, let them work? when God says, *They shall not work.* When Nehemiah was Governor of Jerusalem, he saw the poorer Jews working on the Sabbath, and he forbade it. He also saw the heathen men of Tyre bringing fish and wares to sell on the Sabbath in Jerusalem, and he not only forbade it, but threatened them with imprisonment if

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they repeated the offence. But he did not stop here. It does not appear that the people of Judah themselves trafficked on that day, but they had the power to prevent such traffic on the part of others; and because they did not prevent it, the pious Nehemiah contended with and reproved them. *What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath,* Neh. xiii. 15–21. There are few who come here direct from England or America, who are not shocked at the open profanation of the Lord's day, countenanced and allowed as it is, by those who in their own country would not act thus. Why is it that you do here, what you would not do there? Is not the eye of God as closely upon you, and his laws as strict in China, as on the other side of the globe? And what motive is there for it? Because you wish to make a fortune as speedily as possible, and leave the country? Alas, this is not the way to accomplish your wish, for the wisest of men has said, *A faithful man shall abound with blessings; but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be unpunished*—and, *He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him,* Prov. xxviii. 20–22.

3. You make it a day of amusement; of feasting; of visiting your friends; of travelling to and fro. The Sabbath is the great day for visiting in China. And in your visits, what is your conversation? You talk of the weather, of your amusements, of your schemes, of your business—but not of God, not of the creation, not of the redemption of man. Is this right? The Sabbath was appointed to give you time for serving God. I have seen no part of Scripture that authorizes any part of it to be devoted either to travelling or to visiting. But I have seen a part of Scripture that says, *Turn away thy foot from doing thy pleasure on my holy day: and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable: and honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words,* Is. lviii. 13. Let no man say, "This is only a part of the old Jewish ceremonial law, long since abolished." This is very far from being the case. For, on the contrary, in the very same chapter, the prophet does speak of the ceremonial rites that were of no avail, and after showing their worthlessness, contrasts the duties required of those who would worship God truly; and among them duties occurs the verse just quoted. But here the objection is started, "What a gloomy reli-

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gion you are proposing! Surely God does not intend us to be moping, melancholy creatures?" I answer, surely not. But have you not six days in every week for amusement? Tell me not, that you have not time on the week days, and must have the Sabbath for relaxation. I speak as to wise men—I speak to honorable men, who count it a disgrace to defraud a fellow-mortal. Is it honorable in you, after spending six days for yourselves, to rob your Creator of the only day he has reserved for himself, and spend that too for your amusement? Is it safe for you to do so? Said a dissolute young man to a clergyman, "I spend the Sabbath in casting up my accounts." "Yes, sir," replied the other, "and you shall find that God will spend the day of judgment in the same manner." And when we stand in judgment before God to render an account to him for the time given us here, what shall we say of the Sabbaths, which he intended should be spent in his service, but which too many regard as all their own?

4. Finally. There are others, who, perhaps, do not transgress in any of the ways just mentioned, but who are still by no means free from blame. I refer to those who spend the Sabbath in idleness, and rejoice when it is over. On other days they rise with the lark, but on the Sabbath find peculiar attractions in their beds. On other days the time passes too rapidly, but their listless countenances and vacant air in this day proclaims as loudly as words themselves, *What a weariness it is*, Mal. i. 13. *When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat?* Amos viii. 5. And strange as it may seem, this is done by men who gravely tell us they have not time to attend to religion! The Sabbath is given for this very purpose, and their only study is, how they may "kill it." Aye! They kill one of God's most precious gifts, and in so doing kill their own souls also.

I have spoken plainly—judge ye what I say, as you shall answer for it, not to me, but to God. There is but a single remark to be added. Rather than that Israel should work on the Sabbath day, even to obtain their living, a series of miracles gave them a double supply of manna on the sixth, and we have no evidence tthat the Sabbath was more sacred then than it is now.

Macao, December 31, 1848.

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SERMON XV.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.—1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

It was a remarkable characteristic in the teaching of our Lord, that he never concealed or glossed over the hardships attending a profession of faith in his name. He always set plainly before his hearers what they must expect, if they cast in their lot among his people. There were labors to be performed, and temptations to be endured, and trials to be suffered, and self-denial to be exercised, such as the flesh would oftentimes willingly shrink from,—but he told them to count the cost, for he wished no soldiers in his camp, who were not prepared to do and suffer all that he required. When the rich young ruler came to him, and, with so much humility and apparent sincerity, asked what he must do to be saved, Jesus, we are told, *loved him*, but still he set before him the same unvarying terms of discipleship. *Sell all that thou hast, and come follow me.* The poor ruler went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. While our Lord promised great rewards to his followers, a hundred-fold, even in this life, and in the world to come, eternal life, still

> **"Deny thyself, and take thy cross,**
> **Was the Redeemer's great command."**

The ministers of Christ must follow his example. While we urge you to come unto him; while we pray you to be reconciled unto God; while we set the hopes of life before you; and knowing the terrors of the Lord, persuade you to flee from the wrath to come, still must we say, like our Master, *If any man will come after him, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow him*, Luke ix. 23.

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The apostle Paul was a very striking example of this ministerial faithfulness. None was more anxious than he that men should be saved. His *heart's desire and prayer for Israel was, that they might be saved.* With many tears, and wonderful labors, he laid himself out to save souls. He *became all things to all men, if, by any means, he might save some.* But, with all his anxiety, he never compromised the truth. He *kept back nothing*, however little some might like what he preached. Such, too, was his confidence in the gospel, and particularly in that part of it which speaks of a crucified Saviour, that he never hesitated to declare that, the main subject of his preaching, and the sole ground of his hopes. In Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified, he feared not to confound the Jews, by proving him to have been the very Christ. In the streets of polished Athens, surrounded by every monument of the genius and skill of that far-famed people, he boldly told them of the day of judgment, and *how God had given assurance concerning it, in that he had raised Christ from the dead*, Acts xvii. Therefore it was, that he declares, as in the text, *We preach Christ crucified.* By this, he of course means the way of salvation, through the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross,—that being the reason, and the sole ground of our salvation. This doctrine, together with those inseparably connected with it, are, as he intimates, exceedingly offensive to some, while to others they are equally precious. This is most remarkable. To hear their different accounts, you would not suppose they spoke of the same thing. Let us consider why it is so offensive to some, and why so precious to others.

I. It is offensive to many, because,

1. The Christian religion is meanly thought of by the great mass of mankind. It was formerly a standing reproach against Christians, that they worshipped a "crucified man;" as Celsus, one of their bitterest opponents, said, "After living a life of degradation, he underwent a most shameful and pitiful death." This was equally offensive to the Jews, and to the Greeks; and it is scarcely less so now. I do not speak of a mere outward profession of Christianity. In the country of which the most of us are natives, the people are a good deal like the Jews of old. Religion is rather fashionable than otherwise. It is expected that a man should attend church. Men who are not connected with any church, will read and admire the Bible. Many such would be greatly offended to be thought not religious. They say, "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God,—that he died to

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save sinners,—that he rose again from the dead,—I am free from external vices,—I attend religious ordinances. What lack I yet? Am I not religious?" No, my friends, this is not religion. It is good as far as it goes, but it is not enough. The devils believe as much as this,—and Simon Magus, while still in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity, could say as much as this, and more. This kind of religion is fashionable enough, but true piety goes much farther, and is not so popular with all, or even with the greater part of men. It consists in a steady determination to renounce the vanities of the world,—to imitate Christ,—to do his will at all sacrifices,—to avoid all that is offensive to him,—to testify to the world his salvation, and its necessity,—and to persevere in all this, however the world may laugh. This kind of religion is not so popular, nor so common, and many who are open professors of religion, and some even who hold prominent stations in the church, would scorn to acknowledge such a faith. Yet it is a matter of imperative necessity, that all who wish to be saved, acknowledge such a faith, and act in accordance with its precepts.

2. More particularly. The religion of Christ crucified has some disagreeable doctrines, such as the natural man does not and cannot receive. Among these is that of our total depravity. If the Bible, and particularly the New Testament teaches anything clearly, it is, that in us there is no good thing,—that we are polluted sinners in God's sight,—by nature the children of wrath, —out of favor—exposed, and that deservedly, to death, and the pains of hell forever. There is nothing in us acceptable to God, or worthy of eternal life. Men may be amiable,—men may be moral,—men may be like the young ruler Jesus loved,—but alas, apply the infallible touchstone to their cases, and it will be found that all have gone away backward, each in his own way. It is not much wonder that men dislike to be told these things. We think highly of ourselves, and love to think so; but the religion of Christ brings down all these high thoughts that exalt themselves against God. The doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty, which the apostle so strongly sets forth, Rom. ix. is another that is very unpalatable to most persons. Men do not like to be told that God has the same power over them, that the potter has over the clay, who *makes* one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. Oh how men will fight against this, especially as it is shown in the doctrines of election, of the duty of absolute sub-

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mission to God, and some others of the same kind. The absolute insufficiency of our own righteousness is another part of the teachings of the Scripture, which finds little favor among men. A passion almost as strong as the love of life contends against it. It mortifies the pride of the heart. We would do anything, rather than own our sin, and accept of a free pardon, because we cannot buy the favor of God. If we could only deserve life. How convinced sinners stand and hesitate here! What must I do to be saved? *Wherewith shall I come before God?* But the answer still is, *Believe and be saved.* Acknowledge your guilt and helplessness, and accept of mercy as a pardoned rebel, for there is no other way. Men would willingly submit to any labor or offer any price, even to the fruit of their body, for the sin of their soul, —but to be saved in a way that exalts God, and humbles all the pride of man! to come before him with ropes around the neck! to kneel and say with the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Even those whose hearts are changed by grace often find this a hard saying. But by the cross of Christ all boasting on our part is excluded.

3. The religion of the cross of Christ requires the performance of many duties exceedingly irksome and painful to the natural desires. It requires those who embrace it to mortify every unholy passion, and to forsake every vice. It requires a reformation not merely of the outward conduct, but of the heart. It extends its requisitions to your most secret thoughts, and requires you to be as free from sin, when no eye but the eye of God is upon you, as though your every thought were exposed to the gaze of assembled thousands. This is hard work. Sin has struck its roots deep into the heart, and it is hard to tear them away. You may lop some of its too luxuriant branches,—you may even fell the trunk,—but the living root remains,—and it is not till this is dug up and cast out, that you will have accomplished all that the Gospel demands. How extensive is this requirement! It requires you to lay aside all anger, and guard carefully lest the sudden bursts of passion overcome you at an unexpected moment. It requires you to avoid all profane language, and never to speak the name of God except with reverence. To some men a harder command could hardly be conceived, for though there is no vice that has so little excuse, yet almost none is so hard to forsake, as that of profane swearing. People do not like to be told of their fault in this respect, and are apt to complain if a minister plainly

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informs them of the wrath of God denounced against all who take his name in vain. All unchaste thoughts, words, and actions, must be avoided. Which of us would dare to expose all our thoughts even to our most intimate associates? The Sabbath must be kept holy, even amidst all the temptations to break it. You are exposed to peculiar temptations at sea, for here, work must often be done that could be avoided on land. Hence it is natural that you should lose some of that reverence for it with which you were once, perhaps, accustomed to regard it. These, and many other faults, that must be avoided, are hard to be abstained from. Your very thoughts are full of sin, which must be mortified,—but this is not an easy work. It is very easy to fall into sin,—yes, even for those who are pressing upward, to fall back again. The best of men are like brands plucked from the burning, which easily take fire, if a single spark fall upon them; but notwithstanding these difficulties, the command still is, Hate sin, pray against it, repent of it, watch, lest you be overtaken,—humble yourselves before God on account of it. Crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. Crucifixion is neither an easy nor a speedy death. This kind, as our Saviour said, goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. Now all such preaching is an offence and a stumbling-block to men.

Yet not merely must sin be forsaken—not merely must we die unto sin—we must also live unto righteousness. The gospel commands the performance of every outward virtue, and Christians are expressly said to be *created anew unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* But not merely outward virtues are required. It is wonderful how prone men are to think that these are all. What would any of you give for the friendship and affection of another, which you knew was merely outward, and did not proceed from the heart? Holiness of heart is the great thing. The Scribes and Pharisees were outwardly righteous; nay, they were strict in observing all the law, but Christ Jesus solemnly declared, *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God.* These outward observances are very well, in their place; but there are closet duties, and heart duties, harder still, and yet more important. Keep the heart with all diligence. Imitate the example, the sinless pattern of Christ. Love all mankind, aye, even your bitterest enemies, and do them good as they have need and you have opportunity.

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Deny yourselves even in things lawful, for the sake of others. Visit the poor, and keep yourselves unspotted from the world. It may also be necessary for you, if you embrace the religion of Christ and him crucified, to forsake father and mother, and wife, and friends, and home, that you may honor him. This is a requisition that many have thought too hard to bear, but it is included in the terms of discipleship.

And while doing and suffering all this, you must expect scorn, reproach, and contempt, from the world. You will be laughed at by some for your religion. You will be called moping and melancholy souls. You will be reviled by some, and tempted by others, who may wish to draw you off from such a course. Bodily persecution is hardly to be expected at present, but it may come, and must be endured if it does, for Christ requires the whole heart and the whole service at all times,—and he has assured us, that *in the world we shall have tribulation.*

Such are some of the unpleasant things in the religion we preach. Such are the terms we offer, and to multitudes they seem hard and intolerable. They were a stumbling-block to the Jews. They looked for a glorious earthly prince and kingdom. They desired honors, riches, ease, and pleasure. Behold what a contrast! They looked for a constant succession of miracles and splendor,—and for a Messiah who should reign with worldly grandeur and renown; and behold the author of this religion, living with the poor, a houseless homeless man, despised, reproached, reviled, persecuted, and at last slain in weakness,—crucified with ignominy,—and a similar lot awaiting all his followers. It was a stumbling-block to them.

It was foolishness to the Greeks. Accustomed to displays of learning and eloquence,—fond of fine reasonings and airy speculations,—delighting in cunning subtleties and high-wrought sublimities,—how could they bring down all their high thoughts and renounce all their boasted wisdom, in which they had so long trusted, and become like little children who need to be instructed in the first principles of truth and duty? How could their proud philosophers give up their own systems of religion and trust to the humbling and despised way of God's devising? They could not do it. It was foolishness to them, and when they heard of it, *some mocked, others said we will hear thee again of this matter*, while only a few believed.

It is precisely so now. Christianity in our days meets the

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same reception and rejection. Men would gladly be saved if it could be done in their own way. Some, like the Jews of old, look for various worldly honors,—they seek for ease and authority and the favor of men. Like By-Ends, in the Pilgrim's Progress, they are very willing to walk with religion, in his silver-slippers, when the sun shines and the people praise him, but they are not so willing to walk with him, in rags and disfavor. Others, like the Greeks, of a more literary turn, find abundant reason for discontent in the humbling nature of the doctrines taught. They seek for intellectual gratifications. They have great ideas of the nobleness of the human mind. They are disgusted to find that all their wisdom is of no avail, and that they must become as little children, feeling and confessing their ignorance. How it humbles the pride of human wisdom to find that even the fool may be saved, while some of the wisest of men perish in the fancied conceit of their own wisdom. To all such, and it is a melancholy fact, that even in Christian lands they form a large majority, the preaching of Christ crucified is an offence. To some it is a stumbling-block—to others it is foolishness—and both alike, despise and reject this plan of salvation. They see no beauty in it, they feel no desires to enjoy it, they are blind and cannot see,—for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.

II. But all are not thus blind. There are many who look upon the doctrine of the cross in a very different light. While they see and feel all these difficulties already spoken of, they also see in this despised cross, beauties and treasures which the world sees not. The reason is, that their eyes are opened to discern spiritual things. You may imagine an ointment which being applied to the eye will enable one to see all the treasures hidden in the bowels of the earth and the caverns of the sea; but those who are *called of God* have their eyes anointed with an eye-salve that has more than imaginary power. That only showed illusions to the eye, but this discloses realities richer far than the heart of man ever conceived of. This spiritual ointment consists in the gift of faith, which is bestowed upon all who truly desire it. To all who possess it, Christ Jesus, even as crucified, no longer appears as a stumbling-block, and foolishness. On the contrary they see in him and his religion the power and the wisdom of God. Whatever controversy there be among true Christians, on other points,

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they all agree in this, to exalt Christ to the highest throne, and worship him with the lowliest reverence. To them he displays the power and wisdom of God, and they see more excellency and majesty in him, than in all the splendors of this world; a brightness above the sun's noon-day beams, and far transcending the glories of the starry heavens.

The Jews sought for signs, and displays of power and majesty. To say nothing of all the miracles wrought by Christ during his life-time, what power could be greater than that displayed in raising him from the dead, when the wickedness of man, and the malice of Satan had conspired to keep him there? What a power is this, which vanquishes all the hosts of hell, and rescues Satan's captives from his very jaws! Which meets and bears the anger of a justly incensed God,—pays a full ransom for the souls of men,—and says to the trembling and condemned prisoners, Go forth, for no power in heaven or beneath it shall ever harm you! What a power is this which enables sinful men to maintain a long and successful warfare against the wickedness of their own hearts, and the temptations of Satan, and to come off conquerors and more than conquerors through him that hath loved them! Surely never was there such an array of formidable obstacles as opposed the salvation of man. There was the Justice of God with his flaming sword and righteous demands; there was Satan and all his hosts, a strong man armed, and Legion at his back; there was the world and its thousand charms; there was the desperate wickedness of the human heart, which none but God fully knows. Yet against all these did the Son of God go forth alone. Long and fearful was the conflict. It cost him tears and groans, and life itself—but he overcame all obstacles and gained the victory. He secured our salvation, *blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, that was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it unto his cross*, Col. ii. 14. We wish for no stronger displays of power than are here afforded.

The Greeks sought after wisdom, and because the cross humbled the pride of human wisdom, they hastily rejected it. Yet in the cross alone is true wisdom to be found. For many centuries together the wisest of the ancient sages had been seeking after the chief road,—but with all their searches never found it. The cross of Christ revealed it, and the way of obtaining it.—The Christian religion, *of which the cross is the centre*, finds man in a state of ignorance, helplessness and danger, and it offers a remedy

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precisely suited to his case. It finds us ignorant of the character of God, and it sets before us his true nature, as a God just, and yet merciful; a God who will by no means clear the guilty, and who yet is willing to send his own Son to die for them. It finds us condemned sinners, and unable to devise a way of obtaining the favor of God. What nation is there, that has of itself found out how God might be just and yet justify the ungodly? It comes and tells us that the justice of God is satisfied, and the ransom is fully paid. It gives us full assurance that his justice will not destroy us, but that he will be gracious notwithstanding our many sins. What matter if the remedy thus found contains some things unpleasant to our natural desires? How could it be otherwise? A sick man does not refuse healing medicines because the taste is bitter; and shall we refuse to be saved in the only way that salvation is procurable, because in some things it contradicts the desires of our hearts, and is unpleasant to the corruptions that still abide with us? No. We do not want that which will merely tickle our ears, and please our fancy—we want that which shall save the perishing soul. The cross of Christ alone, can effect this, *for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ.*

We want a motive to urge us on in the performance of difficult duties. We have it in the cross of Christ. In times of difficulty and of trial, we want a shelter. Where shall we find it but in the cross? The serpent-bitten Israelites could find no relief except by gazing at the brazen serpent on a pole; and we can obtain no help, except by looking unto him who was lifted up, that he might draw all men unto him. Notwithstanding the offence of the cross therefore, we still glory in it, and embrace it most gladly. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This it is that satisfies all our wants. Wisdom, and goodness, and love, and mercy, shine conspicuous here.

Oh the sweet wonders of that cross
Where Jesus loved and died;
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.

Macao, January 21, 1844.

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SERMON XVI.

HUMAN NATURE CORRUPT AND SINFUL.

That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.—JOHN iii. 6.

IT was the remark of a profound thinker, "Nothing in nature is more unknown to man than himself." He searches everything, but passes by himself. It is said of the eye, that it sees everything but itself, and the same might be said of man himself.

Yet all men confess the importance, and admit the benefits of self-knowledge. The very heathen said, that the maxim "Know thyself," contained such a weight of meaning, that it must have descended from heaven. Why, then, this acknowledged ignorance of what all admit to be important and beneficial? It probably arises from the fact that self-knowledge is difficult to obtain, and is frequently painful when obtained. We love to think highly of ourselves, but this we cannot do, if we truly know our own character. It is only the fool who trumpets his own praise abroad. Yet difficult as this knowledge is to obtain, and painful as it is when acquired, it is so valuable both for this life, and the life to come, that no pains should be spared to obtain it; and it should be a motive to our exertions that we have such excellent helps to enable us to do so. We have the experience of those who have gone before us, and especially, we have the Holy Scriptures, that infallible mirror in which our true character is so faithfully reflected. Above all, let us study the words of Jesus Christ. Of him it is said, that *he knew what was in man*, John ii. 25, and therefore could not be deceived in the judgments he formed. And as he came from heaven with a heart overflowing with love to man, and seeking our best good, it must be supposed that he would say nothing without the fullest conviction of its truth, and suitableness to our wants. You may hesitate to believe the declarations of men, for they may be inca-

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pable of judging correctly, or prejudice, or ill will may lead them to pervert the truth. But none will say that our blessed Saviour could be guilty of either of these. What then is his opinion of the nature of man? You have it in the words of the text, *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* He is describing to an anxious inquirer the character of man, and the way of life, and in so doing, he advances this proposition, which all admit, that like begets like. As is the nature of the parent, such is the nature of the child. What then does he mean by the word *flesh?* This question is easily answered. In the immediate context, he contrasts the flesh with the Spirit. The Spirit is the Holy Ghost, the author of holiness, the flesh, therefore, must be that corrupt nature from which sin proceeds. The apostle Paul confirms this view, in Gal. v. 19–22, when he says, *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.* The words of Christ to Nicodemus therefore, contain a general declaration that *human nature is corrupt and sinful.* This declaration may be amplified in the three following propositions:—

I. All men are sinners.

II. All men are sinners by nature.

III. All men are totally depraved.

I. *All mankind are sinners.* This is a truth so plain, that few are so hardy as to deny it. Who has ever, in any age or in any land, seen a perfect man? Who does not laugh at the pretensions of those who call themselves perfectionists, and profess to have attained a state of perfect purity? You have heard of the ancient philosopher, who lighted his lamp, and scrutinized the countenances of all he met, and when he was asked why he did so, replied, "I am seeking for an honest man." He sought, but he returned to his house, without accomplishing the object of his search.

What saith the Scriptures? David says, *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one,* Ps. xiv. 2, 3. The apostle Paul had occasion once to examine the character of the whole human race, and what was his conclusion? Were there any free from sin? Were there any who could say, "Stand

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by, for I am holier than thou?" *No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;* and again, yet more emphatically, *There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*, Rom. iii. 9, 23.

But why multiply quotations, when the truth of what is said is admitted by all? A sinner myself, I am addressing an audience, each one of whom admits that he also is a sinner, in God's sight, and his own. Solemn confession! How must that God who is *of purer eyes than to behold evil*, look upon us? With what feelings must the sinless angels of heaven look upon us? With what feelings should we view ourselves, who have received at the Lord's hand nothing but good, and yet have requited his goodness by sinning against him?

II. But the words of Christ mean something more than that we are simply sinners. We needed no revelation to teach what universal experience has made so plain. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* When is it flesh? Is there ever a time, when it can be said of that which is born of the flesh, *it is not flesh?* Surely not. Therefore, Christ teaches that, from the first moment of man's existence, he is a sinful being; nor is there ever a time, from the moment that he comes naked into the world, till he leaves it in equal nakedness, that he is not a sinful being. Very explicit is the testimony of Scripture on this point. God said to Noah, *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*, Gen. viii. 21. And is it not so? We hear much of the innocence of childhood, but who does not know, that, long before children learn to speak, they exhibit evil dispositions, and unkind tempers? Is not foolishness bound up in the heart of a child? Hear David's heartfelt confession. He had sinned a great sin, and when his eyes were opened, his heart melted with sorrow, and he looked over all his past life. Did he find any time when he could say, "Though I have now sinned so grievously, yet once I was not a sinner?" Far from it. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*, Ps. li. 5. The apostle Paul says, *By nature we are the children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. By nature, is by birth; it is our natural condition; we come into the world exposed to the wrath of God. But how so, if our natures at birth are free from sin? The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness; but the soul that is free from sin, is not obnoxious to wrath. Therefore, from the apostle's words we lawfully infer, that as by nature we are subject to God's wrath, by nature we are

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sinful, and deserve his wrath. How can it be otherwise? Being sinners ourselves, how can our children be holy? *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one*, Job xiv. 4. When Adam fell, he lost the image of God, in which he was created, and begat a son in his own image and likeness. That image and likeness was full of sin, and after the same image, all his posterity are born. Is not death the wages of sin? Did ever any sinless being die, except the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of others? But, alas! how many infants are laid in the tomb! Like the spring flower, they fade away.

This is a very painful thought. Mother, delighting in your child's playfulness, can you bear to think that sin lies beneath it all? Can you bear the thought, that, as it grows up, it will exhibit unholy passions, and be like all that have gone before it, a sinner against God? But, painful as the thought may be, it is not less true. Even now, are you not startled by seeing the buddings of evil in their infant actions? Whence these evil dispositions, that so soon show themselves, and so long resist the efforts to correct them? They do not come from example, for with the best of examples you see them. They do not come from precept, for they are shown long before precepts are understood. The only explanation is found in the melancholy words of our text, *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.*

III. Melancholy as are these truths, that all men are sinners, and sinners from their birth, they do not exhaust the meaning of the words of Christ. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.* Good cannot come from evil, nor can the sinful flesh give birth to that which is spiritual and holy. This declaration of our Saviour therefore asserts that all men are totally depraved, and possess no one trait that can secure God's favor, and avert his wrath. I am aware that many will deny this, and say that Christ's words are not susceptible of such a meaning. Let us sincerely hear what is to be said on either side.

1. Before the flood, *God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5. This is the character of the race, and the only exception was Noah, whose heart had been changed by divine grace. Solomon, the wisest of men, speaking by inspiration of God, said, *The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live*, Ecc. ix. 3. Here, also, there is no exception. Still stronger are the oft-

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quoted words of Jeremiah, the prophet. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?* Jer. xvii. 9. Yet more pointed are the words of Paul, who tells us, that all men *are dead in trespasses and in sins*, Eph. ii. 1–3. Dead! Then there is no life, there is no holiness; all is sin, and only sin. As if to preclude all possible doubt as to the mind of the Spirit of God on this point, this same apostle, a man than whom no holier ever lived, tells us from his own deep experience, *I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18.

No forms of expression could be devised to declare more clearly than these do, that in the eye of God we are all sinners; sinners from the womb, and totally sinful. I know it is objected that many persons, who make no pretensions to piety, possess very amiable qualities. Are these qualities sinful? By no means. Yet neither are they holy. It is a matter of great rejoicing that these amiable qualities do exist, and we may justly take pleasure in those who possess them. A rich young man came once to Christ for instructions, and displayed so much humility and amiableness, that Jesus loved him, Mark x. 21. Yet it was concerning him, that Jesus said, *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* These amiable qualities that we possess are merely natural qualities, without which society and man could not exist; but they have no moral excellence in them. We should be monsters without them, and with them are only men. You talk of the beauty of maternal affection, and the devotion of a mother to her child. The same is seen in the beasts of prey. You talk of the noble disposition of one, and the gratitude of another, and the filial affection of a third—but are not all these qualities seen in the brute creation? It is true they are seen in greater perfection, and fuller development in man, but only because his nature is more exalted. And how often is it seen that these and all other excellent qualities are found existing, not only with forgetfulness of God, but with also absolute hatred of him? What is more lovely than friendship, or productive of purer happiness? But, alas, Herod and Pilate became friends on the day that Christ was condemned to the cross; and Voltaire, and Diderot, and others were united in friendship, that they might *crush the wretch*, as they blasphemously called our Lord. The Gipsy mother sedulously preserves her daughter's chastity, but in the same breath sends

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her forth to steal, while herself will pander for the vilest vices of those she hates.

These natural qualities that many possess are amiable indeed, but they should not influence us to think otherwise than the Bible teaches.

Very painful are the truths I have declared. But they are plainly taught in the Scriptures, and too sadly confirmed by all human experience; nor is it any want of charity to think, as Christ thought on such points. It is the best of men, who are most deeply convinced of their truth, and if all men were honest all would feel them. Oh that men would but honestly consider this matter, as they will one day do. Separate yourselves awhile from the world. Commune with your own hearts and with God, and ask yourselves how he regards you. Take his law, and ponder deeply its length and its breadth. Bring your own hearts and past lives to the test of that word which *is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit.* Ask yourselves, and remember when you answer, that you answer for eternity. Which of God's laws have I ever perfectly obeyed? He has said, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.* Has he then reigned supreme in your hearts? Has the desire to please him been so constant, and so strong, that it has never given way to the fear of man, or the love of a creature? And that even self-love has yielded to the fear of God? Whoever else can answer these questions satisfactorily, I cannot. In what action of your whole lives, have you served God, without any intermixture of sin? You have come to the house of God You have read his word, perhaps in secret prayer you have called on his name; in doing all this, did you find no wandering thought intrude? Did no selfish purpose mingle with your wishes? Did no irreverent or worldly imagination pollute the prayer you offered? Have you studied the law of God in its strictness and purity, reaching as it does not merely to your outward actions, but to your inward thoughts—to the idle words of your mouths, and the affections of the soul; and can you say, In all this I have not sinned? Alas you cannot say this, for in the words of the apostle, *What things so ever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,* Rom. iii. 19. Are these things so? Judge ye, of what has been said. I have sought to speak according to that word by which we must all be

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judged at last. It is not pleasant to speak thus, but it is better to hear even humbling doctrines now, than to stand in confusion before the bar of God. Conceal the truth as we may, forget its mortifications, as for a while we may, it is certain that we are the members of a race that has gone very far from God, and the ways of holiness. It is therefore our duty to bow down before God with deep shame and sorrow, acknowledging that we are the descendants of an apostate family, the seed of an unclean race, ourselves unclean. But oh, with how much shame should such a confession fill us. Among men, traitors and the children of traitors, are objects of reproach and contempt; but how much more do we deserve rebuke who have sinned against a God of infinite goodness. With innumerable mercies he crowns our lives, with tender compassion he spares us, with infinite condescension and grace, he entreats us to return and accept his love. But alas, our first father sinned, and we have added to his transgressions, and our children follow our example! *Hear, oh heavens, and give ear oh earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,* Is. i. 2, 3.

2. Can we wonder then, when all have thus sinned, that all should be called upon to repent? It was the main subject of the preaching of John the Baptist. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* It was the first preaching of Christ himself, and it was the command he left to his disciples, to preach in his name, repentance, and the remission of sins. You have sinned against God, and therefore should repent. The longer you have been sinning, the louder is the call and the more imperative the necessity for repentance and a change of heart. It needs no labored argument to prove that hearts such as ours cannot enjoy heaven unless changed by grace. Even were it possible to enter heaven with hearts unchanged, we should find no heaven there, for sin would change the waters of the river of life into gall. But let no man flatter himself with the hope of heaven without repentance, and a new heart. He who never spake an idle word, and whose words shall stand when the heavens and the earth shall have passed away, has assured us of the contrary. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,* John iii. 5. What though the number of transgressors be as nnmerous as the sand on the sea-shore,

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this will afford no security to any one of them all. It is vain to say, "I am no worse than my neighbors, and if I am lost, what shall become of the rest of the world?" There is sometimes reason in such an excuse in human government, for they are short-sighted and weak, and often can neither detect the guilty, nor punish them when discovered. The multitude of evil-doers may sometimes secure impunity among men, but in the just government of God, *the wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God*, Ps. ix. 17. *Except ye repent therefore, ye shall all likewise perish*, and no man when the consciousness that he is lost forever, first bursts upon him will say, "I am unjustly condemned."

3. In what has been said of the character of human nature, we find a ready reason for all the wickedness of men. We are so accustomed to the sinfulness of the world, that ordinary displays of guilt do not surprise us. We look on them as matters of course. But occasionally deeds of fearful wickedness surprise us, or deep-laid schemes of appalling iniquity are displayed to the public gaze, and we wonder how men could be so depraved; occasionally, too, our hearts are crushed within us, at the fall of some from whom we had expected better things. Who was not horrified at the disclosures made a few years since of the systematic robberies and murders of the Thugs in India? Whose heart does not bleed at the enormous atrocities of the slave-trade? Who does not mourn to find that David, the man after God's own heart, in an evil hour seduced the wife of his brave Uriah, and to conceal his guilt, procured his murder? Melancholy indeed are these facts. But are they not the legitimate fruits of the nature we carry within us? How can a corrupt tree bring forth other than corrupt fruit? And if God withdraw the restraints of his grace and providence, who shall say where human wickedness shall stop? Let every man then guard his own heart. Let every man pray to God, that he may not fall, and let no man trust to his own unaided strength; for *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, and every one of us, if left to himself, may equal or exceed the sins that disfigure the lives of those who have most deeply sinned.

4. Finally, I may remark, that the more we know of our own hearts, the more shall we admire the grace of God in having had compassion on us: and the more shall we value the salvation of Christ, that delivers us not only from the punishment of our sins, but from their defilements. Surely it was wonderful grace. God

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saw us in our sins, and there was nothing in us he could love. True, we were his creatures, but we had forfeited his favor by our sins, and said, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. God was not in all our thoughts. He might have lifted his rod and destroyed us forever. But no, *God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* He hath counted no sacrifice that infinite power and love could make, too great to show us his love, and save us from our danger. And what a salvation it is! Satan like a strong man armed claimed us for his lawful captives. Justice demanded satisfaction for God's broken law, and our sins had entwined themselves with every fibre of the heart, and sat enthroned in every affection of the soul. From all these doth Christ deliver us. To the flaming sword of Justice he presented his own side. Against the malice of Satan he contended alone, and having vanquished him, he led captivity captive. He sets up his throne in the hearts of his people, and surely, though gradually, destroys the power of every sin, and at last presents them spotless in the presence of God with exceeding joy. *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*

MACAO, January 28, 1844.

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SERMON XVII.

THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST.

From that time forth, began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.—MATT. xvi. 21.

WE estimate love by the sacrifices it makes, and guilt by the punishment it requires. It was Christ's love to the human race that induced him to die for us; it was the sinfulness of the human race that made his death necessary. Let us consider the circumstances of his death, and the sufferings he endured, and thereby we may add definiteness to our views of the depth of his love, and the magnitude of our guilt. It is a simple narration of facts, to which your attention is now called, and the nature of the subject forbids either exaggeration or coloring.

We are apt to think of Christ's sufferings only as connected with his death. But they did not begin when he was nailed to the cross. All his life he was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* I would not say, as some have said, that he never smiled, but certainly, in reading his history, we are often called to witness scenes of sorrow, seldom those of joy. But it is not intended now to dwell on the scenes of his early life, nor even to glance over the sufferings he experienced, from hunger and thirst, from fatigue and wandering, from temptations of Satan, and sinfulness of men, from the follies of his disciples, and the blasphemies of the Jews. Let us in thought attend those painful steps, which in the close of his life he took for us.

1. It should not be forgotten, in considering what Christ endured, that all his sufferings were foreseen. Even before his transfiguration, he had minutely foretold every circumstance of shame and sorrow. During all his life, the cross had cast its shadow in his path, and the nearer he drew, the darker that

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shadow became. Foreseen evil is evil itself, and though we earnestly desire to know the future, yet in mercy that knowledge is withheld, for who is there that could sustain the prospect of all the ills that are sure to meet on every child of Adam? Christ possessed a nature like our own, and his accurate knowledge of what should befall him must have saddened many a passing hour. It did not tempt him to swerve from his course, but it tinged with gloom his thoughts of the future. Why else was it, that once, when surrounded by an admiring crowd, he suddenly exclaimed, *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour*, John xii. 27.

2. Nor should it be forgotten, that, just before his last period of suffering, he had been received with great applause. He had entered Jerusalem in triumph, the multitude had met him with palm-branches, and spreading of garments in the way, and all the city was moved at his coming, Matt. xxi. 4–11. But in a few days, all was changed, and he who had entered in triumph, and ruled in the temple, was led forth in shame, with none to defend him. It was a great reverse,—not unexpected, it is true, but none the less painful, for these were the people he came to save, and this was the fickleness with which they received him.

3. The last scenes of the tragedy commenced on Thursday night. His disciples had made ready the paschal supper, and, with the twelve apostles, he sat down to eat that passover which *with desire he had desired to eat with them before he suffered*, Luke xxii. 15. It was then that he instituted the Lord's Supper, charging them to observe it in remembrance of him—of his body which was to be broken, and his blood which was to be shed for them. It was night. Already had Judas consulted to betray him, Luke xxii. 4, and, seated with him at his table, he now sought opportunity to accomplish his purpose. Miserable man! He flattered himself that his guilt was unknown, but Christ knew it all, and, giving him the sop, said, *That thou doest, do quickly. And after the sop, Satan entered into him, and he went out*, John xiii. 26, 30. He had been with Christ, had seen his humility, his piety, his love, his compassion,—and now to betray him, and that for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave! *A goodly price* at which he valued his master! How was it possible to be guilty of such a crime? God had abandoned him, and Satan, the master of all evil, had seized him for his own. It seems as though, on this occasion, the devil would trust none of his ordi-

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nary agents of evil. On all other occasions when evil spirits had taken possession of men, they were inferior angels,—but on this occasion, when the Prince of life was to be assailed, none but the prince of darkness must do it, and *Satan* himself *entered into Judas Iscariot*, John xiii. 27. Christ was aware of all the wickedness of Judas' heart, but had still kept him around him, and even treated him with distinguished favor. It was with no ordinary sorrow, that he now saw him, who had eaten of his bread, lift up his heel against him. But whatever his thoughts were, they altered not that pure, unquenchable love that burned in his heart. Judas went out, but he looked on his remaining disciples, and he spoke those words of surpassing affection, and uttered that memorable prayer, which the beloved disciple has recorded at length. His own heart was full of sorrow, but he saw the sorrow of his disciples' hearts, and said, *Let not your hearts be troubled. Peace I leave with you, I will not leave you comfortless. I will come unto you.*

4. The evening was wearing away, but sleep had forever fled from the eyes of Christ. Sorrows now filled his heart, the world knew not of. It was the crisis of the world's redemption, and all depended on him, but surely so great a work could not be accomplished without exertions and sacrifices equal to its greatness. He went forth from that supper table with his disciples to the garden of Gethsemane, whither he had often resorted, John xviii. 1. It was there a scene was witnessed, which angels beheld with wonder. *He began to be sorrowful and very heavy, and said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, Matt. xxvi. 37, 38. Having cautioned his disciples, he withdrew and prayed. It was his hour of agony, but who shall disclose to us the nature of his sufferings? It could not have been that he feared the bodily sufferings of the cross. Many of his disciples have, since his time, endured as great bodily sufferings as those of Christ, and that without shrinking or fear. It was not the fear of what man could do that afflicted him. It was heart-sorrow that bowed him to the ground. It was because the light of God's countenance was removed, and the sense of his wrath pressed upon him, that he suffered so much. The Lord spared him not, though he was his beloved Son. *He laid on him the iniquity of us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise him. He put him to grief, and made his soul an offering for sin*, Is. liii. 6, 10. An angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, for he was *in an agony, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground*, Luke xxii.

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43, 44. Again, and yet again, did he pray, that, if possible, the cup might pass from him; but it was not possible, for if it had, the hope of man's redemption would have ceased forever; and therefore, with submission, he added, *Not my will, but thine be done,* Luke xxii. 42.

5. How long this solemn scene continued, we are not informed; but it was suddenly and rudely interrupted by a crowd of men, coming as if against a thief, with swords and with staves to take him. Our Lord went forth to meet them, and received the treacherous kiss with which Judas pointed him out. He spoke no word of anger, but in sorrow he said, *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?* Luke xxii. 48.

At first his disciples were disposed to resist, but Jesus restrained them, and healed the wound that one of them had already inflicted. It was the hour and the power of darkness, and fear entered the hearts of his disciples. A few hours before, they had all protested that they were ready to die for him, but now they all forsook him and fled, and Jesus was left alone.

6. Betrayed by one of his disciples, forsaken by the rest, and in the power of a band of armed men, he was led by them to the high priest's house; not to find a sanctuary in the house of the minister of religion, but to experience renewed indignities. The underlings of the high priest mocked him and smote him; they blindfolded him and struck him on the face, and many things they blasphemously spake against him, Luke xxii. 63–65. It was during this time that Peter, who had followed afar off, was now in the common hall, where Jesus was kept, and there, once and again, denied that he knew him. It was in the hearing of the Saviour that he did so, *and immediately while he yet spake, the cock crew, and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,* Luke xxii. 61.

No rest was allowed to Christ. In sorrow and tumult, in bitter mockery, and yet more painful denial, he passed the night, *and as soon as it was day,* the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes came together, and he was called before them, Luke xxii. 66. Why dwell on what passed there? With taunts and insults, and smiting of the hands—with false witness and charges of blasphemy—with buffeting and spitting, from which he hid not his face, they judged him worthy of death, Matt. xxvi. 59–68. John xviii. 22.

7. But though they condemned him, they had not power to

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execute their sentence; they were a Roman province, and it was *not lawful for them to put any man to death*, John xviii. 31. They speedily ended their council, for at daylight they had come together, *and it was yet early* when they led him to the judgment hall of Pilate, John xviii. 28. But how should they obtain from Pilate the sentence they desired? The blasphemy with which they charged Jesus, and for which they judged him worthy of death, was not a capital offence by the Roman law. But they knew with whom they had to deal, and having no other resource, determined to work on the fears of the craven-spirited governor, and obtain by tumult what justice would deny.

They brought him to Pilate—but it was a feast day, and fearing defilement if they entered the house of a heathen, they would not enter the judgment-hall! John xviii. 28. They came to put an innocent man to death, on a false charge of blasphemy, and yet were afraid of a ceremonial defilement. Was there ever a greater mockery, or a keener grief than this? The very Being who had given them their law—who had said, *Thou shalt not kill*, and also had commanded them to observe the ceremonial rites, was now in their power, and how did they treat him? They disregarded his most solemn injunctions, but carefully observed the most insignificant matters. *Tithers of mint and anise and cummin, they set at naught the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy!* They feared to defile their bodies by neglect of a ceremony, but feared not to defile their souls with shedding the blood of him, of whom all their ceremonies spoke!

Pilate came out to them, and demanding of what they accused him, they concealed their real charge, and falsely accused him of treason—saying that he perverted the nation, and forbade to give tribute to Cæsar, claiming to be himself an anointed king, Luke xxiii. 2. Pilate must have heard of Christ, and knowing the charge to be false, after a brief examination said, *I find no fault in him*, Luke xxiii. 4. They reiterated their charge, fiercely exclaiming, that he was guilty of seditious practices, and *stirred up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to Jerusalem*, Luke xxiii. 5. Pilate, seeking to avoid the unpleasant office of condemning an innocent man, sent him to Herod. By him he was set at naught and mocked—in scorn he arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back to Pilate. His bloodthirsty accusers were there again. Pilate remonstrated with them. He had found no fault in the man—no—nor yet Herod,

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for nothing worthy of death was found in him. He was willing to gratify them so far as to scourge him—though even this would have been unjust. But this was not what they wanted; and they all cried out at once—*Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas, who, for sedition and murder, was cast into prison*, Luke xxiii. 13–19. Pilate still wished to release him, and hoping to move them to some compassion, commanded him to be scourged; the soldiers crowned him with thorns, and clothing him in a purple robe, with a reed for a sceptre, they bowed the knee in scorn, and buffeted him. In this pitiable state, with bleeding brows, and lacerated by the scourge, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, he led him forth and said, *Behold the man*, John xix. 1–5. But the sight only heightened their rage, and again the cry arose to heaven, *Crucify him, crucify him*, and they added, that he was *a blasphemer and deserved to die, because he had made himself the Son of God.* Pilate, already convinced of his innocence, was yet the more afraid when he heard that, John xix. 8; and influenced by his wife's dream, who sent to him to have nothing to do with that just man, Matt. xxvii. 19, he sought yet again to deliver him from their hands, John xix. 7–12. The morning was wearing away, and the Jews fearing lest their prey should at last escape, brought forward their strongest charge. *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.* This decided the case. Pilate would be just, if he could be without inconvenience to himself; but if the administration of justice should endanger him with the emperor he would none of it; and after a faint remonstrance, *Shall I crucify your king*, John xii. 15; *he gave sentence that it should be as they required; and he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will, and they led him away to be crucified*, Luke xxiii. 24–26.

8. Their object was gained. On Thursday the Lord had walked in the streets of Jerusalem free, but his hour was come. His own disciple betrayed him, and that night they seized him in the garden of Gethsemane. No rest was allowed him, and when Friday morning dawned, he was led to the Jewish council, and thence to the Roman judgment-seat. From Pilate he went to Herod, and Herod sent him back to Pilate. He was mocked and scourged, and condemned, and all before the sun had reached the half of its meridian height.

Having obtained judgment against him, they lost no time in

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carrying it into execution. It was the custom for the condemned to bear his own cross, and *Jesus bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the Place of a skull*, John xix. 17. But fainting with watching and suffering he sunk beneath its weight, and they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, to bear it after him, Luke xxiii. 20. Thus he went, bearing, but not for himself, the anger of God, the rage of men, and the malice of devils. Surely hell from beneath was moved to meet him at his coming, and heaven from above stooped down to gaze on the scene. A crowd of people and of women followed, bewailing and lamenting him; but the heart that ever forgot its own grief to minister to those of others, still beat within him, and he turned and said, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children*, Luke xxiii. 27, 28. They came to Calvary, and there they crucified him. The shape of the cross you all know. It was laid upon the ground and the criminal fastened to it by nails driven through the hands and the feet. It was then lifted up, and suffered to fall into the hole dug for it, which it did with a shock that racked the whole body, and sometimes dislocated the bones of the person crucified. Thus he hung suspended by the nails which had pierced the most sensitive parts of the body. It was the most shameful death inflicted by the Roman laws, and freemen never suffered it—but Christ had been sold for the price of a slave, and the death of a slave he must die. It was a punishment of the acutest agony. The wounds from the scourging inflamed, and the weight of the body being suspended on nails sent pangs of thrilling anguish through every member; the blood rushed to the head, and its circulation being impeded, the head became dizzy, and the whole man sick. An indescribable thirst seems to have been an unfailing attendant of crucifixion. It was common to give a stupefying portion to those about to be crucified, that the sense of pain might be somewhat blunted, and for this purpose they offered our Saviour wine mingled with myrrh; but he refused to receive it. It was needful that he should endure every pang. Afterwards, when the thirst of crucifixion came upon him, he said, *I thirst*, and they gave him vinegar in a sponge. How truly might he have used the words of the xxii. Psalm, *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels: my strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death*, Psalm xxii. 14, 15.

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Still the Jewish rulers were not satisfied, and they came to his cross to feast their eyes with his miseries, and torment his ears with additional jeers and scorn. *He saved others, let him save himself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* The soldiers also mocked him, and the very malefactors reviled him—though one of them afterwards repented, and found mercy of the Lord. All these were outward sufferings, and they were not the bitterest that Christ endured. The agony of the garden was not yet ended, and when he hung upon the cross, his soul was still exceeding sorrowful. Hence that cry of bitter anguish, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* and that other cry expressing more than human language could utter, when *he cried again with a loud voice.*

Darkness covered the earth, for the sun could not look upon such deeds of iniquity. Darkness covered the hearts of the weeping disciples, and darkness covered the soul of Christ himself, for he saw not the pleasant face of the Father whom he loved.

For six hours he hung upon the cross. Men lingered sometimes for two or three days, but it was not necessary that Christ should thus linger. At nine o'clock he was crucified. It was the hour for offering the morning sacrifice. Darkness speedily veiled the heavens at midday. At three o'clock, the hour of offering the evening sacrifice, he cried, *It is finished.* The work of atonement was complete. The demands of justice were satisfied. The savor of his offering had gone up to God and was accepted, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, John xix. 30. The priests were ministering in the temple at the time, and to their astonishment, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the mysteries that no human eyes save those of the high priest had ever seen, were exposed to the common gaze. Henceforth, the way into the holiest of all, and the way into heaven, were made plain.

Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, came to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus for burial. Their request was granted, but ere they took him from his cross, a soldier pierced his side with a spear, and forthwith came thereout blood and water, John xix. 34. He was dead, and they bare him away to his solitary tomb. That day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on. But oh, how slowly did its hours pass, and how sorrowful were those that had loved him while alive! A sword had pierced through the heart of her that bare him, and hope had forsaken

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the souls of his disciples, *for they remembered not the words that he spake while yet present with them.*

You have heard the story of the sufferings of Christ. It is a history often repeated; but one that must ever be full of interest to the sons of men. Why did Christ suffer all these things? It is one of the laws of God's government, that his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and the soul that sinneth it shall die. But Christ Jesus had no sins of his own. He came not into the world like other men, nor was he tainted by that original corruption which defiles all human beings. He lived on earth for thirty-three years, but in all that time he spake never an idle word, nor did an evil action; living in the midst of sinners, an impure or unholy thought never entered in his mind. Did he not appeal to his bitterest enemies, Which of you convinceth me of sin? Did not Judas who betrayed, and Pilate who condemned, and the centurion who executed him, all bear witness to his innocence? Whence then his sufferings? God never does, and with reverence I say it, God cannot inflict one moment's suffering except for sin. There is, therefore, but one way to account for the sorrows of our Lord. He bore the punishment due to our sins. How often is this declared! It is repeated at least ten times in the liii. of Isaiah.

He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement of our peace was upon him,
And with his stripes we are healed.
The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This was the reason why he suffered. But why these exquisite tortures? these excruciating pangs, these protracted agonies? Why was his life but one long sigh, and why this painful death? Why was he *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?* If he must die for sin, why might he not have lived in ease, and peace and quiet, and at last sink peacefully to the grave? Was not death itself, though divested of its terrors, sorrow enough for such a one as he? It is hard to answer these questions, if you think sin a small thing. Let those who trifle with sin and think it a light matter for God to pardon and pass it by, come hither and behold what it cost the Son of God to atone for it. We may laugh at sin, but Christ never did. We may roll it as a sweet morsel under the tongue, but the Son of God poured out his heart's blood on account of it. Could any of the angels of heaven

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have atoned for a single sin? No, nor all the heavenly host united. The blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin. Its stains sink too deep into the soul. It is that abominable thing which God hates, and the only thing in the universe which he does hate. We shall never know what sin is, and how God regards it, except we view it from the cross of Christ. Be it remembered too, that it was our sins which helped to nail him there.

Yet what induced Christ to suffer thus? Manifestly it was impossible we should be saved if he did not suffer. But why not leave us to perish in the ruin we had drawn down upon ourselves? Did the human race beseech him to come and be their Saviour? Did the earth fall on her knees and ask for mercy? Alas! no,—so far were men from asking him to come, that on the contrary, when *He came to his own, his own received him not.* It was sovereign and infinite love alone that induced him to come. He saw and pitied the misery of the souls he had made. And to rescue them from the consequences of their own folly, he made himself a sacrifice for sin. Can human tongues declare the greatness of that sacrifice? He had sat on the throne with the Father. From that great height his eye had scanned every step that he must take. He knew beforehand all the misery he must undergo. Every act of ignominy,—every word of scorn,—every strife, and every pang. Deliberately he came down, with unfaltering step he walked on, he ascended the cross, and descended to his grave. *Being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God,—he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being formed in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,* Phil. ii. 6–8. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us. Herein is love, not that we loved Christ, but he loved us, and gave his soul a ransom for us. *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*

Macao, February 4, 1844.

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SERMON XVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.

Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.—MATT. v. 18.

WE live in a world of law and order. In its original constitution there was nothing left to unrestrained license, but all things were perfectly subject to the rules imposed by the great Ruler of all. And even now, though *sin which is the transgression of law* has entered, there are traces everywhere of the original regularity. Even the wandering comets have their laws, and the rolling waves of the ocean submit to rules. In the heart of man a law was once written, and had it been obeyed, there would have been neither sin nor sorrow now in the world. But alas! our first father sinned, and in consequence all laws, even those of animal nature, and inanimate existence, became more or less impaired and defective, and *the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*, Rom. viii. 22.

But God did not suffer his creation to rush on ruin that must follow a state of anarchy. It was a state of anarchy when man fell; for when the highest of God's creatures on earth deliberately broke the most solemnly proclaimed of all God's laws, what else could be looked for, but that all beneath should follow the evil example? But God in mercy put forth his hand, and by his providence and grace he restrained both man and beast. Gradually, by direct revelation, he gave laws to his servants to take the place of those which the practice of sin had worn away from their hearts. Yet man went on in his evil course. With added years, he added sin, until at last it was said of the race, *They have all gone out of the way, and the way of peace they have not known*, Rom. iii. 12, 17. At last God determined to embody the whole law in a compendious form, and to publish it with solemnity that it might be a witness for himself, and that he

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might thus prepare the way for a fuller revelation of his purposes of mercy.

In his sovereign election, he passed by larger and powerful nations, and chose Israel to be the receptacle of truth, and the depository of his law. *The Lord did not set his love upon them, nor choose them, because they were more in number than any people, for they were the fewest of all people*, Deut. vii. 7. But he loved them, and therefore chose them, with great signs and wonders he led them from Egypt, and in the second month they came and encamped before Mount Sinai. It was to this that they had looked forward, ever since they left Egypt, as the place where they were specially to serve God, and they came to it with raised expectations. It was certainly a place well chosen for the purpose. Before them rose the mountain rough with rocks and hoary with age. Around them other mountains rose, and above them were the heavens. There was nothing else. No traces of man appeared in this solemn presence chamber of the Almighty, but they were in the desert alone with God. It was a glorious occasion. There was a nation led out from another nation by the hand of God. His pillar of cloud and of fire had gone before them. Bread from heaven was their food, and water from the rock their drink; and God spake with their leaders face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend.

It would seem that they reached the mountain on the forty-sixth day after leaving Egypt, and that the forty-seventh, forty-eighth and forty-ninth were spent in making preparations that they might worthily hear what God should say. Bounds were set about the mountain; they were to abstain from ordinary pursuits, to wash their garments and their bodies, and to sanctify themselves. Moses told them that *the Lord would come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai*, Ex. xix. 11, and with solemn anxiety they awaited the day. It came at last, a day such as never was before, and shall not be again until the world shall assemble to hear the judgments that shall be proclaimed against all who violate the law then delivered. *It came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud: so that all the people that was in the camp trembled*, Exod. xix. 16. Moses led them out, and arranged them in order at the mountain's base. *Mount Sinai was altogether as a smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of*

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a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly, Ex. xix. 18. It was a sight that no eye of man had ever seen before, for the flames stretched up into the midst of the heavens, and the clouds and the smoke and darkness rolled above, Deut. iv. 11. Even inanimate nature trembled at the presence of God. There was also the voice of a trumpet sounding long, and waxing louder and louder. We may perhaps form some conception of other parts of this great event, but it is not possible for us to conceive of this. It was as a sound like that of the archangel's trump which shall awake the dead. It issued from the flame and the smoke, it rang through the vault of heaven and reverberated among the mountains of Arabia. The people trembled, and even Moses said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*, Heb. xii. 21. The trumpet ceased to sound, and after another warning, and additional preparation, *God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honor thy father and thy mother: that it may be well with thee, and that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

When was ever a law given with so much solemnity? The ministering angels (Gal. iii. 19) looked on with fear, and the people trembled before their God. Compared with this scene, the solemnities of human courts are but insect pageantry.

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It is not possible in the limits of a single discourse to dwell upon all that is important concerning this law. But there are some general remarks that should be borne in mind whenever we peruse it, or whenever it is brought to our minds.

I. *It is of universal obligation.* It was indeed given to the Israelites, and they were long a distinct nation, but it was never intended to be confined to them. It was not like the ceremonial law, which was intended only for them, and was a burden which other nations were not told to bear. We are creatures,—dependent creatures, and by the terms of our existence must have a law, written or unwritten, the law by which we live, and by which we shall be judged is still the same. It was written on Adam's heart when he stood alone in Eden, and though sin has blotted its beauty, some traces of it are still seen in the heart of every man. Hardened and sinful a man may be, but no man has ever yet lived, who in all his life gave no evidence that he was ignorant of every distinction between right and wrong. Even the Gentiles, who have not the law, who never heard of Moses or of Sinai, do by nature many things contained in the law, and these, having not the law of Sinai, are a law unto themselves. *They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another*, Rom. ii. 14, 15.

Those who think that Christ Jesus came to destroy the obligations of the law, are greatly mistaken. So clear is his testimony to the contrary, that it is hard to see how any reflecting mind can for a moment harbor such a thought. Did he not himself declare, *I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil?* Matt. v. 17. And did he not explain the law in a way that showed its universal obligation—rescuing it from the false glosses of the Jews, and sending it forth anew with the impress of his own authority? And what do the ten commandments contain, of either a local or temporary character? What is there in them unsuitable in our days? Or what society can be conceived of, as more prosperous and happy, than that society would be, in which they should be perfectly obeyed? Or what other law is there that is binding on all, if the law written on tables of stone is no longer binding?

II. *The Law is holy.* It cannot be otherwise. Its author is God, a being of perfect holiness, and the law is but the transcript of his will. Himself the standard of perfect purity, all that emanates from him is necessarily conformed to the same standard.

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Heat proceeds from the fire, and light from the sun, and Holiness from God. Were the law not holy, it could not be his. Hence its incomparable excellency. *What nation is there that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?* Deut. iv. 8. Other nations have selected their wisest men, and these have collected the experience of ages, and thus formed their laws; but the best of them are full of errors and defects. Who has ever seen or heard of a perfect law, or a perfect constitution on earth? Not so the law of God.

The Law of the Lord is perfect.
The testimony of the Lord is sure.
The statutes of the Lord are clean.
The commandment of the Lord is pure.
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
Ps. xix. 7–9.

Thus sang the Psalmist in ancient days, and the apostle, from his own experience testifies that *the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good,* Rom. vii. 12. Holiness is indeed its chief excellence, however hard it may be for sinful man to see that it is so. It is hard for us to estimate the holiness of the law of God, for sin has blinded our eyes that we cannot easily discern spiritual things. It would have been impossible, had not Christ Jesus lived on earth, and shown in life and action all the law commands. Look at him, and study his character. In him was no guile. There was no fault, no error, no mistake. In thought, in word, and in deed, he kept the law perfectly, and showed to us what it means.

"We read our duty in his word,
But in his life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters."

Such is obedience to the law, and had there been no sin, such would all men have been. What a blessed world would this have been, when wars and deceit, and ingratitude, and sorrow, should have been unknown, and language without terms to express them. Such is heaven. It is the glory of that happy place, that there the law is perfectly obeyed, and all are holy beings. Go through all those vast dominions. Examine narrowly each inhabitant. All are clothed in white, and their crowns are of pure gold. Stain or blemish or spot there is none, for the beauty of holiness reigns. An unkind word, or a wrong

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action, or a sorrowful face is never seen there—for the law of God is obeyed. That same law which is given to us, is given to them, and because it is honored there, life and happiness are possessed.

III. *The law is spiritual.*—It goes directly to the heart, and takes cognizance of every secret thought. We are apt too to think of it, as extending merely to our external deportment, and that because at first sight it appears to relate chiefly to external actions, therefore it has little to do with those that are spiritual and eternal. This is a great error. Even amidst the ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual there are ample proofs that the law had reference chiefly to the heart. Not only does it forbid revenge, and actual bodily injury to our neighbor, it also expressly forbade the Jews to *bear any grudge against the children of their people*, Lev. xix. 18. Hence it was that the Psalmist says, *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts*, Ps. li. 6. And does not our Saviour himself sum up the whole law of the ten commandments, in the two simple precepts, of love to God, and love to man? *Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*, Matt. xxii. 37–40. Look at our Lord's exposition of the commandments in Matthew, and see how he applies them to the heart. He detects and condemns rage in its spark; licentiousness in the first glance of the eye; covetousness in thoughts; and profaneness in a careless expression. The *word of God is the sword of the Spirit*, Eph. ii. 17; and can he use carnal weapons? *The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. iv. 14. Such is the description given of its nature by the apostle Paul, and it is a description drawn from his own experience. He had been dead once. He had looked on the law as a mere code of ceremonies, and thought that an external conformity was all that was required. But when he examined it more closely, he found that this was not enough. The law also said, *Thou shalt not covet*, and covetousness is a sin of the heart. Does the law then, in one particular, go down to the secret thoughts of man? If so, it must do the same in all; and then who can stand? Whose heart does not condemn him before God? Who is not then guilty of breaking each one of

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God's commandments? Thus the apostle reasoned, and his conclusion was, *I know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin*, Rom. vii. 7–14.

Hence it is easy to see how extensive are the requisitions of the law. If every sin even of the heart is forbidden,—and if every secret thought is to be brought into conformity to the law of God,—then we may well say, with him of old, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad*, Ps. cxix. 96.

Its holiness, its spirituality, and its extent appear small and unimportant now because our minds are so occupied with the trifles around us, that we see not the magnitude of things beyond. We hold up our little hands before the eye, and straightway the glorious sun is hidden from us. But the time is coming when all these trifles will have vanished away, and our naked souls shall stand before the bar of God. Crowds of attending angels shall surround us, and eternal happiness or eternal misery shall be the result of that day's deliberations and decision. Then shall the law of God appear in its majesty and purity. The splendors of its first announcement on Mount Sinai shall disappear before the stern glory in which it shall then be arrayed, for by it shall we be judged. Those who have had the written law, shall be judged by the written law, and those who have never heard the law written on tables of stone shall be judged by that which is written on their hearts. But *enter not into judgment with thy servant oh Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*, Ps. cxliii. 2.

IV. *The law shall last forever.* Human laws vary with the fancies of those that make them, or the exigencies of the times; but God never changes, and his law is like himself, immutable. That which it required of Adam in the garden of Eden, the same it demanded of Israel at Sinai, and the same will it call for at the judgment-day. *Forever, oh Lord, thy word is settled in heaven*, Ps. cxix. 89. *Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled*, Matt. v. 18. Nor even then shall it fail. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away*, Matt. xxiv. 35.

Such is the law of God. Its terrible sanctions, and its glorious rewards, we cannot now speak of, but it is important to ask, in what relation we stand to it?

That man must have very low views of the law of God, or very high ones of himself who thinks he is able in himself to obey its commands. We fearlessly challenge the world to

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produce a single instance of a man who has never transgressed the law. Who is there on whom it does not even now lay its iron grasp, and say *Pay me that thou owest?* Matt. xviii. 28. It is in vain to plead past or prospective obedience, for nothing less than perfect and perpetual obedience can be accepted.

The law has two uses. The first is to convince us of our sins. It sets before us our duty to God, and it shows us how grossly we have failed to perform that duty. It shows us that our sins deserve and shall receive punishment, unless we can find some way of escape. There is but one way, and that way is by the cross of Christ. The law, therefore, is our schoolmaster, which leads, or rather drives us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith, Gal. iii. 24. The second is, to be the rule whereby our lives must be regulated. We do not expect to be justified by our obedience to the law—but by the obedience of Christ, who, in our stead, has obeyed the law and made it honorable. But he who is justified by Christ, must necessarily lead a holy life; and what standard of holiness is there, or can there be, except the unchanged and immutable law? Let no man say, therefore, that we undervalue the law, or remove the necessity of obeying it. We honor the law. It must be studied, and it must be obeyed; for he who does not study and understand the law, will never feel that he needs to come to Christ. And he who having come to Christ, does not obey the law, by that very disobedience, shows that his profession is false, and his heart unchanged.

Macao, February 25, 1844.

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SERMON XIX.

ADOPTION.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.—John i. 12.

It is not an uncommon thing among men for one person to be adopted into the family of another. Such acts are legal, and often useful, and are acknowledged as such in almost all countries. The person so adopted takes the name, adopts the customs, and enjoys the privileges of the original members of the family with which he becomes connected. Adoption is often the act of some wealthy and childless man. And most commonly there is something in the personal appearance, character, or history of the person adopted which induces to such a course. There are undoubtedly cases in which it arises from motives of pure compassion and benevolence; but generally the person adopting pays as much regard to his own interest as to that of the person whose society he seeks.

In God's family there is also an *adoption of sons*, Gal. iv. 5, and upon it depend important consequences. It is one of the benefits which they receive, who by God's grace are effectually called from sin to holiness; from a state of wrath to a state of favor: and it is one that shows in a surprising manner the ineffable love of God. In adoption among men a stranger is taken into the family and treated as one of them, though the very act of adoption presupposes that he has no original right to such treatment. But in the gracious dealings of God there is even more than this. Not merely does he accept the believer as righteous in his sight for Christ's sake—not merely does he pardon his sins, promise him exemption from punishment, and the enjoyments of the glories of heaven—there are blessings even richer and sweeter than these. He receives the believer into the num-

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ber, and gives him a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. And what relation can be nearer or dearer than this? When its nearness is contrasted with our natural distance from God, and our unfitness for such intimacy, we shall find it hard to conceive, and still harder to declare, how great that grace is which calls us to such a privilege. Naturally we are very far from God. We neither know him, nor care to be under his eye. We count it no honor or privilege to be his; and by our actions, if not by our words, we say to the Almighty—*Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, Job xxi. 14. Why should he seek for us, or wish to adopt us into his family? He is no childless being who needs some one to console his loneliness. The Son of his love, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and in whom he greatly delights, is ever in his bosom. Heaven is filled with holy beings, in whom as in unsullied mirrors, his own glory is reflected; and it would be melancholy indeed to think that any world beside our own was peopled with a race of sinners. Why select his sons from among sinful men, when God is able out of the very stones to raise up children? Yet behold the love of God! He passed rebellious angels by, and sent the offers of grace and life to our world. And though his offers were received with neglect, and often with scorn, his purposes of mercy have never been remitted. He follows us, he calls us, he entreats our return. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me. My repentings are kindled together*, Hos. xi. 8. Like the father of the prodigal son, he sees us when yet a great way off, and runs to meet us on our return, and counts no gifts or honors too high to bestow upon us. *And thus it comes to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, they are called, the children of the Living God*, Rom. ix. 26.

The cause of this distinguishing favor will be sought in vain, if sought in ourselves. It is found in the sovereign electing love of God alone. This is declared by the apostle Paul in terms as clear as it is in the power of human language to use. *He hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*, Eph. i. 5. What he once said to Israel, he now says to all who become the sons of God. *None eye pitied thee, to have compassion on thee: but thou wast cast out into the open field to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast*

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born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. He determined of his own free will and grace, to call those who shall be saved into the fellowship of his Son. For this purpose he casts their lots where they hear the gospel; by his grace he inclines their hearts to receive the truth, and to return to himself. Thus he invites them to Christ, and they become one with him. Is he a son? So are they. Is he beloved? So are they.

In the act of adoption, as well as in justification and sanctification, the office and importance of faith is seen. It is only those who believe in Christ that are received into this relation. *To as many as believed on him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,* John i. 12. It is by faith that the believer is united with Christ, and in consequence of that union, he is regarded and treated as a son. *Behold then what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 1, 2. The privileges of the sons of God it would be in vain to attempt to enumerate. Even the beloved disciple did not profess to know them all; but there are more than enough revealed to make the heart overflow with gratitude to the God who has bestowed such grace upon us. It was to be expected that God should enrich with many gifts those whom he adopts as sons. Even among men it is so. We being evil, give good gifts to our children; and shall not God much more, give good things to those he loves? *He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32.

One of the chief benefits attending our adoption into the family of God, is *confidence before him.* In our natural state we fear our Creator, and like Adam in Eden, we hide ourselves when we hear him coming—or if we appear before him, it is with fear and trembling. We stand as criminals dreading the lash, and we are like slaves possessed with the *spirit of bondage.* How can such a one love God? How can he appear in the presence of the Holy One who inhabits eternity, without confusion? But when the spirit of adoption is received, all this is changed, and he who formerly stood afar off, is brought nigh by the blood of Christ. God is no

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longer an angry judge, but a gracious Father, and all unworthy as the believer is, he stands in his presence with confidence, thinks of him with affection, and calls upon him without fear. *Having received the spirit of adoption he cries Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15, and from that time forth he says to the Almighty, *My Father, thou art the guide of my youth*, Jer. iv. 4. No relation on earth is dearer than that between a father and his son, and yet this is the relation in which God chooses to stand towards us. It would have been presumptuous in us to aspire so high, but we may now do it without fear, for it is Christ himself who teaches us to say, *Our Father which art in heaven*, Matt. vi. 9. By no other religion is God brought into such near relations to man. Even the ancient Jews compared with the Christians stood afar off, and the name of God, *Jehovah*, they scarcely dared to pronounce. It is related that a Christian, a Jew and a Pagan, once met together. The Christian demanded of the last by what name he called the god he worshipped; but the Pagan could not answer, for their name is Legion. The Jew said, "We call our God, Jehovah, Jehovah God, the Almighty and Eternal, the self-existing and unchangeable." "It is a glorious name," replied the Pagan, "but a fearful one." The Christian said, "We call him *Our Father*," and the Jew and the Pagan joined their hands and exclaimed, "We also will worship him."

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 16, 17. This is another of the benefits of adoption into the family of God. Among men, he who is adopted expects to receive an inheritance among the children ef the family which he joins, but that inheritance is often small. Not so here. The riches of God are infinite. "The cattle upon a thousand hills are his—the treasures of the earth and of the sea are his, and the shining stars above, are but golden sands around his footstool." What an inheritance may his children expect to receive from him. All things are his to bestow, and he is willing to give all things. Nay, already has he done it, for in his own book we read, *All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are yours*, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. It is declared over and over again that the sons of God shall want no good thing, and that whatsoever they ask they shall receive.

I am aware that to all this it is objected that those who pro-

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fess to be Christians, are no better off in this world than others, and that many of them even are called to endure sorer afflictions than those around who make no such professions. This apparent incongruity between the promises and the actual condition has led many to doubt the truth of God's word, and even induced believers themselves to despond. But it requires very little consideration to show that there is no real incongruity; nor will it surprise the man in whose heart true faith is found, to be told, that these temporary privations and afflictions, are but additional evidences of the love of God; and that in the end they shall accomplish still greater good to those exercised by them. The Christian in this world is but a minor. He is under age, and therefore it is not to be supposed that he shall at once enter on the full enjoyment of his whole estate. The inheritance is reserved for him. It is laid up in store, and kept beyond the reach of robbery or loss. A sufficient support is given to him, and in due season he shall enter on the enjoyment of the whole; and that enjoyment shall be prolonged throughout eternity. How different is his estate from that of heirs on earth! For many years they look forward to the possession of their inheritance, and when at last they obtain it, with what a precarious grasp do they hold it! Wicked men may deprive them of it. The winds, or the waves, or the fire may destroy it; and at the best, a very few years will call them away from it. Not so the Christian's inheritance. For a few years he expects it, and then through unending ages he possesses and enjoys it. It never grows old. It never grows less. On the contrary, it is constantly increasing in value, nor has he the slightest fear of being deprived of it. And the trials and losses the Christian meets with in this state, are really blessings in disguise. They are not pleasant to bear. They often wring his heart with anguish. Nevertheless afterwards, they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to them that are exercised therewith. We are like children who need to be educated, and disciplined for future life—and rest assured God will not spoil his children. If they need it, he will use the rod, and his soul will not spare for their crying. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If you endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement whereo all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons*, Heb. xii. 6–8. We are like men sick of a severe disease, and the physician who would cure it,

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must use his sharp instruments and bitter drugs. Does the physician hate his patient because he uses these painful methods to cure him? Or would he show more love were he to hold his hand, and administer opiates when sharp stimulants are needed? The great Physician of souls understands well our case, and no one who has trusted to his skill has ever repented of his confidence.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace,
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

In the darkest hour, and times of deepest distress, when flesh and heart faileth, still God is the strength of the Christian's heart, and his portion forever. Weeping may endure for a night, but assuredly joy shall come in the morning, and the believer shall say, with him of old, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted,* Ps. cxix. 71.

The promise is sure to the sons of God, that all things shall work together for their good. Some things bear the appearance of evil on their face, but they leave the peaceable fruits of righteousness behind them. Therefore, neither tribulation nor distress, nor famine nor nakedness, nor peril nor sword, shall separate the believer from the love of God, or remove his claim to be considered as a son of God. All these things may come upon him, but there is a hand that rules, and directs, and restrains them all, and that hand is *his Father's hand.*

But before any one can lay claim to these great privileges which the sons of God enjoy, he must be satisfied that he is really a child of God. How, then, shall this be learned? It is not a trifling subject, nor should we delay to satisfy ourselves on this point. Some complain that it is difficult, while others affirm that it is impossible to know it with certainty, and presumptuous to suppose that we can be assured of our final salvation, until we are actually in the possession of it. That it is presumptuous to aspire after such assurance, it would be difficult to show, and why it should be impossible, it is hard to conceive. It is not ordinarily difficult for men on earth to learn who their parents are. A child usually knows its own father. There are bonds of attraction between the two, and the child's affection and reverence usually make it manifest to others. It is even so here. Our feelings toward God, our reverence and affection for him, and the

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manner in which we act in all our intercourse with him and for him, are the best evidences whether we are really his children or not. *Hereby do we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us*, 1 John iii. 24; for *the spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*, Rom. viii. 16.

Would you know, then, whether you have been received into the family of God? How do you regard him? Do you reverence him as the great, and glorious, and holy God, who inhabits eternity, and the praises thereof? Do you delight to think of him, as a just and pure Spirit, who cannot look upon iniquity—in whose presence the heavens are not clean? At the same time, while you feel towards him all the reverence due from a creature to its Creator, do you regard him as a kind and affectionate Father, reconciled to you through the death of Christ? Do thoughts of him, and frequent recollections of his grace and excellence, come into your minds, as naturally as affectionate remembrances of a father do, into the heart of an obedient child? What is the character of your prayers to him? The child of God comes to his heavenly Father, as to a tried and faithful friend. He delights to hold communion with him. He has no concealments from his God; and the full tide of affection, that finds on earth no suitable object for all its strength, gushes forth, as, with the spirit of adoption, he cries, *Abba, Father*. He asks himself, How would my father have me act in such and such circumstances? and he has no greater delight than to bring all his works, and perform them as under the very eye of God. *He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* But the child of God fears not to bring even his imperfect services; and if he has done wrong, his spirit finds no rest, until, with ingenuous repentance, he has confessed them to God.

We judge of parents, in some degree, by their children. Let the children of the Most High so act, that God shall not be ashamed of them. Is he holy? So must his children be. Is he kind and compassionate? So let all his children prove. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*, Matt. v. 48.

It is almost superfluous to add, that no class of men are so truly happy, as those that are the sons of God. We have seen that they are not exempted from afflictions and trials. It is true of them, as of all around, that man is born unto troubles as the

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sparks fly upward. Nay, I have often thought, that the Christian has more sorrows, and he feels them more acutely than the men of the world. Yet it is no paradox to assert that, notwithstanding all this, his joys are far greater and more desirable than theirs. There is an illumination of the understanding, and an enlargement of the capacities, in the child of God, which, while it subjects him to some sorrows, which men of the world do not experience at present, at the same time opens to him stores of enjoyments, which other men do not understand, and which more than counterbalance his added sorrows. Has he not a hope fixed upon the rock of ages, even in the darkest hour? What though the storms rage, and the tempests lower? What though all around him are pale with fear, and trembling with anxiety? True, there are dark clouds, but he knows that behind those clouds, the hand of his Father is stretched out for his defence. It is said that a little child on ship-board in a storm was observed to be as calm and happy as usual, though all around were in momentary expectation of perishing. On being asked if he had no fears, he replied, with child-like simplicity and confidence, "No, my Father is at the helm." Even so may the Christian say; for he has heard a voice, which says to him, *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*, Is. xliii. 2.

And what though he has but little of what this world calls riches! His residence may be a cottage, his clothes may be coarse, his food scanty, and his friends few; but what can he want, who calls God his Father? Nor is he deprived of gratification in the sight of that which he sees around him, though he may not call it his own. He is related to everything he sees, from the stately oak to the bending blade of grass—from the glow-worm to the sun in the heavens—because the Maker of all these is his Father.

"His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers, his to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And, smiling, say, '*My Father made them all!*'"

Macao, March 3, 1844.

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SERMON XX.

THE GOLDEN CALF AT SINAI

Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine angel shall go before thee: nevertheless, in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf which Aaron made.—Exod. xxxii. 34, 35.

After the law was given on Mount Sinai, there was a pause. Then *Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice and said: All the words which the Lord hath said, will we do*, Exod. xxiv. 3. This unanimous consent of the people was followed by the solemn ratification of the national covenant between God and Israel. Moses and Aaron and seventy elders, after the appropriate sacrifices and offerings went up into the mountain. There, *they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness, and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink*, Exod. xxiv. 10–11. Thus the covenant was ratified; the laws of God were clearly made known; the people promised obedience; he became their God, and they were called his people. Then again there was a pause, *and a cloud covered the mount, and the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel*, Exod. xxiv. 15–17.

At no time since the creation of the world were so many and such magnificent displays of the glory and the power of God made to men, as at the period when the law was given from Mount Sinai. No nation ever saw him, and heard his voice, as did Israel. With what feelings of awe must the nation have gazed upon that devouring fire, as it flamed in the desert! The trumpet had ceased to sound, and the voice of God was no more

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heard, and they stood in those ancient solitudes gazing, and fearing, and yet adoring the God who had shown so much condescension, and of whose faithfulness to his promises they were now the witnesses. Reasoning after the manner of men, we should say, that a people who had seen such wonderful things, and received such distinguishing mercies, could not speedily, if ever, prove recreant to their solemn vows. Least of all should we expect, that in sight of all these tokens of divine presence, they should openly rebel against the Lord. But it is a melancholy page in the history of human nature which we read at the foot of Mount Sinai. *Even in Horeb, the scene of all these wonders, they provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry with them, to have destroyed them*, Deut. ix. 8.

After the six days in which the glory of the Lord appeared upon the mountains, and which it would seem that Moses spent in solitary communion with God, the Lord called unto him out of the midst of the cloud. He then went into the cloud into the immediate presence of the Almighty, and remained in the mount forty days, and forty nights, Exod. xxiv. 16–18. This first period is not to be confounded with another similar period, which he afterwards spent there, Deut. ix. 18. During all this time he did neither eat bread, nor drink water, Deut. ix. 9. What his employments were, we scarcely know. During a part of the time, he was employed in receiving the tables of stone, on which the ten commandments were written; and in receiving the minute directions and instructions of God, respecting the tabernacle and its furniture, and the priesthood of Aaron. The patterns of all these things were showed to him in the mount, Exod. xxv. 40; Heb. viii. 5. Doubtless, he also spent much time in prayer, and communion with God, Exod. xxxi. 18. It was a solemn and a sacred time, even as Elijah in the same desert, and as Christ, each fasting for forty days, were prepared for the great works which they respectively accomplished. He that would serve God acceptably before men, must needs spend much time in intimate communion with his Creator in solitude.

The Israelites were still at the base of the mountain. It still burned with fire, and its smoke still ascended unto heaven. For awhile they gazed with curiosity and with fear. By degrees these feelings abated, and at length, strange to say, gave place to indifference—nay to satiety and contempt. Mere outward ordinances and imposing ceremonies have little permanent effect, if

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the heart remain untouched. Israel was the professed people of God, but there is every reason to suppose that the majority were far from being true worshippers of Jehovah. They were mere professors, at first even clamorous in their profession, then indifferent, then rebellious. They were those whom Christ compares to the *stony ground.* The seed falls on the ground where there is not much earth, and immediately springs up because it has no depth of earth; but when the sun is up, it is scorched and withers away.

For several days they waited for Moses, but at last weary of waiting, they came in a tumult to Aaron, and demanded of him that he should make them Gods to go before them, Exod. xxxii. 1. In their hearts it would seem, they were already desirous to return to the land of Egypt. Indeed, Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian church, expressly charges them with harboring such a purpose—*In their hearts they turned back again into Egypt*, Acts vii. 39. We might have hoped, that Aaron, the brother of Moses, and the intended high priest of Israel, would have withstood their wicked intentions. But so far as appears, he made no remonstrance, and gave them no warning. He called for their golden ornaments, and they hastily brought their most precious jewels. Of these he made a golden calf, and set it up before them. It was received with applause, and the people, mindless of the voice of God, which had said, *I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt*, Exod. xx. 2, exclaimed, *These be thy Gods, oh Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, Exod. xxxii. 4. In Egypt they had been accustomed to seeing their neighbors worship Osiris under the form of a calf, and to this they naturally turned as the most appropriate representation of God. It is not certain that they meant to forsake entirely the worship of Jehovah, but they had been so long accustomed to seeing God worshipped by means of images, that they wished still to continue the practice. This at least was Aaron's intention, for he built an altar before the calf, and made proclamation saying, *To-morrow is a feast unto Jehovah*, Exod. xxxii. 5. But how miserable a subterfuge was this! What ideas could they have of the glorious Jehovah, when they represented him under the image of an ox that eateth grass? What memories were theirs, that did not recall the solemn words, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath.* How could they suppose, that the God who had showed himself in such

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array of splendor and majesty on that mountain's top, could be pleased with such representations at its base? But no thought of these things entered their minds. *Early on the morrow* they rose up, and began their worship. *They offered burnt-offerings and brought peace-offerings. They sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play*, Exod. xxxii. 6. This last expression is one that fills the mind with painful suspicions. *They rose up to play.* It is well known that in the worship of many of the idols of the heathen, there were rites of a nature so brutal and obscene, that it is a shame even to speak of them; and these rites are occasionally referred to in Scripture, by the very expression here used.

What a spectacle was here! But a few short weeks before, and the nation had stood trembling at the foot of Sinai. They had heard that fearful trumpet's voice—had seen the ascending flame and smoke—had felt the earth quake beneath them. The command had sounded in their ears, and repeatedly they had promised obedience. Even yet was the mountain smoking before them, and already were they openly and shamelessly violating the commands they had promised to obey! Where was Aaron and the seventy elders, who had gone up to the mount, to eat and drink in the presence of the God of Israel? Foremost in the transgression. *How quickly had they turned aside out of the way which the Lord had commanded them!* Deut. ix. 16. Thus they wrought great provocations, Neh. ix. 18. *They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God their Saviour which had done great things in Egypt*, Ps. cvi. 19–21. Everything around conspired to aggravate their crime. Sinai—the law of the commandments—the covenant whose blood was scarce yet dry—the smoking cloud—and the manna, on which they lived, all witnessed against them; but their ears were deaf to every voice.

It is a terrible thing to sin against God. We may forget him, but his eye is ever upon us, and every action we perform is recorded in his book, to meet us when he calls us into judgment. He saw the crime of Israel, and it grieved him at his heart. Was this the people whom with so many signs, he had redeemed from Egypt? Was this the people whose solemn vows were still on record before him? And was this the way in which they remembered their promises and requited his care? Then the Lord said unto Moses, *I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked*

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people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation, Exod. xxxii. 9, 10. These were words of terrible import; but Moses, so often the mediator between God and his people, was now their intercessor, and his prayer deserves to be studied, not only as an example of entire forgetfulness of self, and of generous earnestness in behalf of an offending people, but as an example of the force of argument in prayer with God. It is short, as all the public prayers of the Bible are—but it is comprehensive, and earnest as became one who thought not of himself but of the glory of God, and of the good of men. *Moses besought the Lord his God*, and with arguments he sought to avert his fierce indignation. Why should he now suffer his wrath to wax hot against his people? Were they not his *own people*, and though offending, would he not pardon them? Had he not done great things for them already; and would he now put it out of his power to do more for them? Nay, if he now destroyed them, would he not, so to speak, lose all he had already done for them? Besides, this would give the Egyptians and other enemies of God and his people ground for triumph, and of slander. Would they not say, that all the promises of God were merely intended to lure the people on to destruction, and that God had not power to accomplish what he had promised? Wherefore should the Egyptians have occasion to say, that for mischief God had brought the Israelites out, that he might slay them in the mountains, and consume them in the desert? But above all, he pleaded the promises and the covenant of God. Had he not sworn by his ownself, with an immutable oath, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, that the Israelites should be his people forever? What though one or many generations should rebel, was not the covenant sure? did it not have respect to Christ? and would the faithful Jehovah now make his own promises of none effect?

It was a prayer full of wisdom, and of faith, and the Lord was graciously pleased to hear it, and to repent of the evil he had thought to do unto his people. He remembered for them, the covenant he had made with their fathers, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies, Ps. cvi. 45. Let it not be thought when God is said to repent, that he is subject to change of purposes, and fluctuations of counsels, as men are when they repent. He changes not. His purposes remain ever the same, for the Strength of Israel is not a man that he should repent. In con-

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descension to our limited capacities, the sacred writers sometimes speak of him as if he were actuated by passions like our own; but this is only to express the more strongly the depth of his abhorrence of sin, and the multitude of his mercies to men. Thus he is said to be angry—and to repent—but no passion ever clouds his mind—no change ever crosses his counsels. It was well said by Augustine, "Oh Lord, who is like thee? Thou lovest, but art not inflamed with passion; thou repentest, but dost not grieve; thou art angry, but tranquil withal, thou changest thy works, but changest not thy counsels. Woe unto those that are silent concerning thee, when even the loquacious cannot express all thy wonders!"

Moses came down from the mount to the camp of Israel, but how different the scenes he saw from those he had just left! It was truly a descent from heaven to the lower regions; from intimate communion with a holy God, to the orgies of men who debased themselves to the level of the brutes. Meek as Moses was above all the men on the face of the earth, the spectacle he now beheld was more than he could, and more than he ought to bear. *As soon as he came nigh unto the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hand, and brake them beneath the mount*, Exod. xxxii. 19. This breaking of the tables on which the ten commandments had been written with God's own finger, was not a hasty burst of passion. It was an intended symbolical action. Israel, by their making and worshipping the golden calf, had broken the solemn covenant; and the breaking of the tables was intended to show them, that on God's part also, the covenant was no longer binding, and that they must look for judgments and wrath from him, who, had they continued faithful, would have showered upon them unmingled blessings. The punishments speedily began to fall upon them. The calf which they made and worshipped with applause, was taken by Moses and treated with every mark of indignity and contempt, while they were compelled to assist in its destruction. *He took their sin, the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust, and strewed it upon the water of the brook that descended from the mount, and made the children of Israel to drink it*, Deut. ix. 21. Exod. xxxii. 20. Then after a severe reproof to Aaron, he called for all those who were on the Lord's side, to come unto him. The children of Levi, who, it would seem, had

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not gone with the rest of the nation in their transgression, joined themselves to him, and at his command, they took their swords, and passing through the camp from gate to gate, slew three thousand of the people. It is most probable that these three thousand had been foremost in the offence, and undoubtedly Moses acted by divine command in ordering their execution. It was a terrible thing to see the armed messengers proceeding on their deadly work, and slaying *their companions and their neighbors, their sons and their brothers;* but so manifest was the sin of the people, and so evident the power of God accompanying these avengers of his insulted majesty, that no resistance was made, and no murmurs were heard. It would have been easy for the many thousands of Israel to have resisted the single tribe of Levi, but guilt had weakened their arm, and made them naked.

The hearts of Israel were sad that night. Like Adam, when he had eaten the forbidden fruit, they felt, that for a momentary trifling gratification, they had sinned a great sin, and laid themselves open to the greatest sufferings, without the slightest advantage. They had broken God's laws, and their own promises; they had cast themselves out of the covenant, and angered Moses, their best friend; they had seen their leaders in crime laid in the dust; and they knew not but that in a short time they should themselves suffer the same penalty. The day had commenced with feasting and revelry, but it closed with fearful forebodings. They were in the desert; what if God should leave them there! It was impossible for that multitude ever to extricate themselves from those defiles. Perhaps the manna might cease to fall, and if no sudden judgment should take them away, yet want would speedily cause them to perish. Could we have looked into the camp of Israel, we should have seen darkness and sorrow, even the light darkened in the heavens thereof. So it always is with sin—sweet at first, but bitter in the end.

The words of Moses on the morrow were not such as to increase their hopes. When he prayed to God in the mount, he had had no conception of the greatness of their sin, but now his mind was overwhelmed with its magnitude; and even with the assurance he had, that God would pardon them, he scarce dared to hope for it. *On the morrow he said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin*, Exod. xxxii. 30. He went up again to the mountain, and again appeared before the Lord, as an

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intercessor. But what could he say? The sin of the people could not be concealed. It was written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond. With what words should he plead for their forgiveness? It would seem that an excess of emotion choked his utterance, and his broken expressions show more clearly than any eloquence of speech, the earnestness of his heart. *And Moses said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin*—here he paused. The sentence is incomplete, for words do not always express all the feelings of the heart—*if thou wilt forgive their sin.* Most earnestly did he desire their forgiveness, but he feared that such a sin could not be passed over. Yet the alternative was too dreadful for him to contemplate, and rather than see the people whom he loved cut off, he would prefer to die:—*if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.* Exod. xxxii. 31, 32. It was simply a prayer that he might die. To be blotted out of God's book of eternal life, is a prayer that neither Moses, nor any other child of God could offer. The answer of God was one calculated to awaken the anxieties of Moses, and to fill the minds of Israel with fearful forebodings. He intimated, that though for the present he should not punish them, yet their sin should not be forgotten by him, and they themselves should have abundant cause to remember it. They had basely turned their backs upon him, and if sorrows came upon them afterwards, let them remember what brought them down. *Go now, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine angel shall go before thee: nevertheless, in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf, which Aaron made,* Exod. xxxii. 34, 35. The Jews have a proverb, which says, that "no affliction has ever visited the people of Israel, in which there was not some particle of the dust of the golden calf."

The remarks already made, render it unnecessary to add any lengthened practical application. A few remarks in conclusion shall suffice.

1. It is easy to see that no professions, and mere external privileges and ceremonies are sufficient, in the service of God, when the heart is not engaged. All these will not keep us from open and disgraceful sin. Fear is but a poor ingredient in worship. Who feared the Lord so much as Israel, when the flame

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and smoke of Sinai ascended, and the trumpet's voice sounded in their ears?

2. How desperate is the wickedness of the human heart. I know of no reason to suppose that the hearts of the men of Israel were any worse than ours; or that we should not, in the same circumstances, act precisely as did they. Who maketh us to differ? or what have we that we do not receive from God? Let the restraints of his grace be withdrawn, and where shall we stop in our downward career?

3. This history furnishes a terrible example of God's hatred of sin, and of his determination to punish it. No greatness of power, no fear of the numbers of men shall keep him from inflicting on those who sin all that their sin deserves. What though a nation sins against him, he can in a moment arm the avengers of his justice; he can turn a man's sword against his own brother, he can commission the invisible powers of the air, all nature at his command shall arise and pursue the transgressors. *He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?* Dan. iv. 35. And none shall be safe when he maketh inquisition, Amos ix. 2–4.

4. The conduct of Moses in all this affair is peculiarly worthy of remark. Without dwelling on it in all its particulars, observe the arguments with which he enforces his prayer. He refers specially to the covenant made with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. But what was that covenant? To whom had it special reference? It was a covenant that looked directly to the Lord Jesus Christ as its great Mediator. *The covenant*, says Paul, *was confirmed of God in Christ*, Gal. iii. 17. He was its centre—he was its hope—and a prayer that pleaded that covenant was really a prayer in the name and for the sake of Christ. This was therefore the main argument with which all the ancient patriarchs strengthened their prayers; and this is our only hope. Whatever we plead for—be it the forgiveness of sin, or the bestowment of favor, we have no other name save that of Christ, and him crucified. It is our only, and our all-sufficient hope.

MACAO, March 9, 1844.

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SERMON XXI.

COMMUNION OF MOSES WITH GOD.

And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.—Exodus xxxiii. 11.

THE worship of the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai was a melancholy event. Man may well hide his face, and blush for shame as he reads the account; for if we except the sin of Adam when he fell, and of Judas when he betrayed our Lord, there, perhaps, has never been a case of more aggravated wickedness. Every circumstance serves to enhance their guilt, and the wonder is, not that three thousand were put to death immediately, and that the Lord plagued the people because they made the golden calf, but that his anger did not wax hot, till it had consumed the whole nation. But if this history be melancholy, as showing how low human nature can sink, it is equally instructive in the displays it makes to us of the character of God. One of the brightest and most attractive revelations of his excellency which the Old Testament contains was made immediately after, and in consequence of the sin of Israel. Indeed a new and fuller revelation of his grace was then needed; for rich as had been the previous displays of his mercy and long-suffering to Israel, it seems that even Moses could scarce believe it possible for him to forgive this daring offence. The character of Moses too shines brighter from its contrast with that of Israel. The lower they seem to fall, the higher does his faith and piety soar, until at last we are compelled almost to turn away our faces, and forbear to gaze upon the excellency to which, by God's grace, even a sinful man may attain. What a contrast between the people and their leader is presented in the history of the golden calf. While Moses worshipped God, they worshipped an idol; but soon the scene was changed, and the exulting idolaters, stripped of their ornaments,

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filled with fears, and stings of conscience, mourned over their folly. It was then that the character of Moses shone out in its brightness. Had he left them to the punishment their sin deserved, and which God seemed ready to inflict upon them, there was a promise to himself that his seed should become a great nation. But forgetting himself entirely, and anxious only for the glory of God, and the prosperity of his people, he sought their pardon. Not satisfied with a single petition, he returned again and again, to the throne of grace, nor did he leave it till he obtained the answer he desired. There were no prayers for himself, all were for his people. And yet behold the benefits of intercessory prayer, not only to those who are the objects of prayers, but to him who prays. We are told that the Lord *turned again the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends*, Job xlii. 10; and thus when Moses prayed only for Israel, he obtained in addition for himself the richest tokens of God's favor that he ever received. Before this time he had been admitted to very intimate communion with God; but now the Almighty was pleased to reveal himself even more gloriously, and to speak *unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend.*

Let us consider the favor of God shown to Moses, as seen,

1. In the friendly intercourse he was allowed to enjoy with him.

2. In the wonderful revelation of the character of God made to him.

3. In the effects on Moses, as seen even in his bodily appearance.

1. It would seem that no other mere man ever enjoyed such intimate and unrestrained intercourse with the Almighty, as was granted to Moses on this occasion. Abraham was called the *Friend of God*; but one who compares the account of Abraham, in the xviii. of Genesis, when he pleads for Sodom and Gomorrah, with that of Moses in the xxxiii. of Exodus, when he pleads for Israel, will see, that even Abraham did not approach so near to God as Moses did. The Lord himself testifies, that there was none whom he regarded as he did Moses. He says to Aaron and Miriam when they contended with Moses, *If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. Moses, my servant, is not so: with him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold*, Numb.

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xii. 6–8; and accordingly it was said of him after his death, *There arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face*, Deut. xxxiv. 10.

In reading this chapter we feel that we are standing on consecrated ground, and never were the words of the poet more applicable than here—

> "Prayer ardent
> Opens heaven, and lets down a stream
> Of glory on the consecrated hour of man
> In audience with the Deity."

The Lord had commanded Moses to lead up the people of Israel to their appointed land; but how could Moses do this unless the Lord should tell him who should go with him? The Lord had told him that he was received into special favor, but Moses wished some more manifest token of this favor. *Now therefore I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me the way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.* To this affectionate and earnest petition a favorable reply was given. *The Lord said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.* But this was not all that Moses wanted. Not for himself alone did he ask rest, and the favor of God. He felt that his interests were inseparable from those of Israel, and continued his supplication. *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.* As if he had said, It were better for us to die in the wilderness, than to leave this place without the favor of our covenant God. *For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the nations that are on all the face of the earth.* His request was granted, for Moses was as one of the special friends of a king. It is not expected of a great monarch that he should know all the officers that serve him; but he knows the names of those who are nearest to him, and serve him most faithfully. Such was the relation in which Moses stood to God. *And the Lord said unto him, I will do this thing also which thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name*, Exod. xxxiii. 13–17.

2. Emboldened by the condescension of the Lord, Moses had yet another request to present, *and he said, I beseech thee show me thy glory.* To those who know but little of the character of God,

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this may seem a strange petition. Had not Moses already seen the glory of God, as no other mortal ever saw it? What brighter revelations could he expect to receive? Why should he wish for more? But let us not think so meanly of God. Our Creator is a being of infinite and incomprehensible majesty and excellence. After we have tasked our powers to the utmost to comprehend his character, there is still an infinity of glory beyond—and he who has rightly learned anything at all of God, will desire to advance yet farther and farther in that knowledge—forgetting all that he has learned, he will still press forward to know more. Like Moses, his prayer will still be, *I beseech thee show me thy glory.* The more he knows of God, the more he will desire to know; the more he learns of God, the more he will be able to learn, for the very reception of knowledge concerning him, increases our capacity to receive additional stores of such knowledge. And the more we know of him, the richer will be the happiness it affords, for it was *not* of this knowledge that Solomon spoke when he said, *in much knowledge is much sorrow.* Nor need we fear ever to exhaust the knowledge of God, for after our highest attainments in it, we shall still see so much beyond, that we shall exclaim with the apostle Paul, *Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out,* Rom. xi. 33. It was the sight which Moses already had of the glory of God, which quickened his desire to know more of it, and led him to pray, *I beseech thee show me thy glory.* His prayer was well-pleasing to God, and it received a gracious response. The Lord promised to show him a part of his glory, but its full brightness Moses, nor any other man, could not receive. How can we, who cannot look even upon the sun with uncovered eye, look upon him who made the sun? We must come by degrees to the knowledge of God; and he commonly reveals his glory to us as we are able to bear it, and in proportion to the earnestness of our prayers for it. He said unto Moses, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see my face and live.* It was a common opinion among the Hebrews, and from them it extended to other people, that no man could live after having seen God. It is certainly natural to

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suppose that no creature can gaze unharmed on him who *dwelleth in light, which no man can approach unto*, 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The words of God, which close the xxxiii. chapter, are difficult to be explained. They refer to some revelation of God's glory, that should be made to Moses, but its precise nature we shall probably never know as long as we are in the body. There was a cleft in the rock in which Moses was to be placed, and where he should behold some part of the glory of the Lord, but not all, nor even its brightest part—*thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen.* Whether this refers to some visible personal appearance of God, that should be made to Moses—or whether the whole is a mere figurative expression, is uncertain. I know of no sufficient reason why we should not suppose that it was a visible personal appearance of God, which should be made to Moses, and of which he should see only some less luminous part. It is true that the Father is never seen, nor does he ever assume a bodily form. But the Lord Jesus Christ, the equal of the Father, the co-eternal son of God, did often assume a bodily appearance, before his incarnation, and was seen by men, in greater or less displays of glory. There is nothing contrary to the analogy of Scripture in supposing that on this occasion, to reward the faith and prayers of his servant, he assumed a body like that he now bears in heaven. But a body so glorious as that is, could not be beheld by one who was still in the flesh. When Christ was transfigured in the mount, and Moses and Elijah were with him, his face did shine as the sun, and yet even then he held back half his glory, for how otherwise could Peter and James and John have looked upon him? So when Moses on this occasion was favored with a sight of that Redeemer, of whom he was so eminent a type, he was not allowed to behold that intolerable brightness, which man cannot see and live; but a display was made to him suited to the circumstances of his body, and the capacities of his mind. The Lord Jesus Christ, *who is God over all blessed forever*, Rom. ix. 5, and who was the giver of the law of the ten commandments, assumed a body, and appeared to Moses alone in the mount. He caused his goodness to pass before him, and revealed himself—but in condescension to the weakness of his creature, he covered his face until he had passed, and caused him to see only the retiring beams of his majesty. We cannot look upon the sun, but we gaze delighted on the gorgeous pencillings of the western sky, when he has set.

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Even so Moses, whose face was covered when the Lord was before him, beheld the glories that remained where the Lord had passed. Whether this display of the glory of the Lord was made to Moses at the time we are speaking of, or whether it was delayed until the time when he came up with the tables of stone, which were hewed, after the first were broken, is uncertain, and is of little consequence to be known. In either case the favor shown to Moses was great, and the revelation then made of the character of God most glorious. Moses was commanded to come up alone to the mountain; no other was to come with him. In this he was a type of Christ. Moses was the mediator and intercessor for Israel, and as he stood alone before God, to plead for his people, so Christ our mediator, is our only advocate and intercessor. *There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. *Moses went up to the mount; and again the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there,* Exod. xxxiv. 5. But though he came in a cloud, it was not with that fearful magnificence with which he had appeared to Israel. Moses was a favored child, and now the Lord revealed to him the mild radiance of his love, that filled his soul with peace. *He proclaimed the name of the Lord.* The name of the Lord, is commonly used, either for the Lord himself, or for his character, and to proclaim his name, is to set forth his character, and declare his excellency. How great and glorious is our God! What one of the gods of the heathen pretended to any of the excellencies which we adore in Jehovah our Creator? *The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.* Moses was in the very presence-chamber of the Almighty, and without delay he embraced the opportunity again to plead for Israel. *He made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, oh Lord, let my Lord I pray thee go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance,* Exod. xxxiv. 6–9. His prayer was heard and answered, for when did the prayer-hearing God neglect such faith and prayer as those of Moses? There are blessings, for which he will be inquired of by the house of Israel, before he

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will do it for them; but never yet has he said to any of the seed of Jacob, *Seek ye my face in vain*, Is. xlv. 19.

3. Once before had Moses been in the mount alone with God, and for forty days he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. He now spent another similar period there, but what his employments were, we are not informed. Day by day the sun rose, and pursued his course and set again—day after day did Israel look up to the mountain's top for the return of their leader; but days and weeks passed away, and still Moses was alone with God. What revelations of the divine character must have been made to him then! How must his soul have expanded, as he drank in richer and yet richer draughts from the original fountain of all goodness and blessedness! No other son of Adam ever has enjoyed such opportunities of communion with his Creator, as were granted to Moses. At last, the forty days passed away. To Moses, they probably seemed but a few hours, for joy counts not the passing moments. But to Israel, who awaited his return with anxious expectation, they must have seemed long. At last, they behold him descending the mountain, with the tables of the testimony, the sign of God's reconciliation, in his hand. It would be a subject for a painter's skill, to depict the eagerness with which they ran to meet and welcome his return. But why do even Aaron, and the elders, as well as the children of Israel, fear to come nigh him? Why do they gaze upon him, as upon some celestial visitant? Why must he call them, and urge them to come, that he may talk with them? It was because he had been living among the beams of the glory of God, and not only was his soul filled with his goodness, but even his body partook of the glory in which he had dwelt. He was not himself aware of it, for so completely was his attention engrossed with the character of God, and the displays he had seen in the mount, that he thought not of himself—*but the skin of his face shone*—and all men took knowledge of him that he had been with God, Exod. xxxv. 29–35. So bright was the radiance of his face when he came down from the mountain, that it was necessary for him to veil his face, in order that the Israelites might come near him. This was another mark of God's special favor towards him. Not only did he give him near and constant access to himself, but he put honor upon him before all men. There are but few examples of such tokens of God's favor to men. When Stephen was brought before the Jews, there seems to have been something in his appearance like

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that now presented by Moses. *All the people saw him that his face was as it had been the face of an angel*, Acts vi. 15.

In this respect, also, Moses prefigured Christ. Our Lord was once transfigured, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white as the light. It is not probable that the glory of Moses was so great as this, but it was sufficient to show in what favor he stood with God, and to give the people great ideas of that prophet, *like unto Moses*, who should hereafter appear, and of whom *Moses in the law did speak*.

The account of the intercourse Moses had with God, to which we have now been attending, explains satisfactorily the reason of those excellent traits which we admire in his character. Few men are more worthy of our admiration and imitation, than Moses. Few men have been so highly honored in all ages, and few men have so richly deserved honor. In whatever point we contemplate the character of Moses, it is remarkably perfect. Naturally, it would seem, he was of a hasty spirit, and prone to speak and act under the impulses of passion. Such appears to have been the case, when he slew the Egyptian whom he found smiting an Israelite. Yet, it is very seldom we see any traces of this disposition in all his dealings with Israel. This was not for want of provocations, for they provoked him often, and grieved his spirit, rebelling against the Lord, and speaking unkindly to himself. Yet, so completely had he the control of himself, that it is recorded of him, that he *was very meek above all the men that were upon the face of the earth*, Numb. xii. 3.

Moses was a man in whom we should naturally expect to see symptoms of pride. Brought up in the palace of Pharoah, with the wealth of Egypt at his command, yet afterwards giving up this, and becoming the head of a nation, whose slightest actions were noticed, and whose word was law, how naturally might he have taken credit to himself. But, on the contrary, he was ever humble in his own estimation. To say nothing of the low value he put on himself when he was called of God to stand before Pharaoh, he gave a striking proof of his forgetfulness of self, when he came down from the mount. His face shone so brightly, that Israel feared to come nigh him. Yet he was the last to notice it. His spirituality is equally remarkable with his meekness and humility. He might have sought great things for himself. He might have become himself the head of a great nation. He might have placed his children in offices of trust and honor,

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instead of leaving them to be lost among the other descendants of Levi. But these were not the objects of his ambition. He was little in his own eyes, and, far from seeking the pleasures of this world, he cared only for those that belong to another. When he might have sought for any of the pleasures of the earth, his prayer to God was, *I beseech thee show me thy glory;* and it does not appear that in all of the second period he spent in the mount, he did anything else but spend his time in spiritual exercises.

These things may, at first sight, seem strange, but the reason is plain. Moses had seen God—had intimately known his character—and the natural effects of such knowledge, were to make him feel his own nothingness, the vanity of all things earthly, and the incalculable superiority of those that are eternal. How could a man, who had known God as Moses did, give way to passion or pride, or set any value on the trifling enjoyments of the world?

These are some of the benefits of studying the character of God, and were there no command, one would think that self-interest alone would prompt men to seek for such knowledge. But it is lamentable to see how little even those who call themselves Christians, know of their Creator. His glory shines in the sun—it is seen in the world around us—it is felt in every step we take, and every action we perform, for *in him we live, and move, and have our being.* Yet how few there are whose notions concerning him are right. Most men think of him, as though he were in all respects such a one as themselves. To such, and to all men, I would say, in the words of Eliphaz, the Temanite, *Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.*

MACAO, March 17, 1844.

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SERMON XXII.

THE BLESSING OF TRUSTING IN CHRIST.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.—PSALM ii. 12.

THE second Psalm was composed by David, the king of Israel. This is evident, because, though his name is not attached to it, in the book of Psalms, it is expressly ascribed to him by the company of the apostles, Acts iv. 25. It is uncertain at what period of his life it was composed, though a probable conjecture is, that it was after he was seated on the throne of Israel, but before he saw all his enemies vanquished. It takes its tone and coloring from the circumstances of his own life, and very properly, for there never was a more eminent type of Christ than he. There can be no doubt that its chief reference is to Christ, of whom it forms a very striking and important prophecy. It cannot be entirely and satisfactorily explained, unless it be admitted to be a prophecy of Christ; but with such an admission, its explanation is easy, while the frequent quotations from it in the New Testament, place this point beyond a doubt.

The Psalm is to some extent dramatic in its composition. It opens with an address from the prophet, exposing the opposition made by the rulers and people of the earth, to the kingdom of Christ. The prophet then declares the folly and danger of such opposition to God, and introduces Jehovah himself declaring his firm purpose that his anointed one shall rule over all, and possess supreme authority. This is followed by an address to all kings, rulers, and people; exhorting them to submit to this exalted personage, and showing the benefits of such submission.

Although Jesus Christ is the rightful ruler of this world, both in virtue of his own divine nature, and of his Father's appointment, yet his kingdom has ever been opposed by men, and has been upheld only by constant exertions of the divine power.

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When he came into the world he found few to welcome him, but many to contend against him. He came unto his own, but his own received him not. His life was a constant contest with the rulers and the people of the Jews, and to human eyes, a most unequal and unpromising one. What could an unarmed leader with a band of unlearned fishermen, do against the power and the wisdom of Judea, of Greece, and of Rome? Nor were his enemies slow to perceive their advantages, and to use to the utmost, all that they possessed. Of a truth, against him were gathered together, both Herod the king of Judea, and Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, and the Gentiles and the people of Israel, Acts iv. 27. To all this the Psalmist refers, in the first three verses of the Psalm. *Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break these bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.* The prophecy informs us distinctly that such opposition shall ever be made to Christ, though the very form in which it is expressed shows that it will ever be fruitless, and that it will return with double loss on the heads of the opposers. Such was the case with Julian, the Roman emperor, who after being educated in the Christian faith, gave all his energies to the work of its destruction. He pleased himself with the hopes of success, but in the midst of his career, he met his death wound on the field of battle, and saw that all his efforts were fruitless. Stung with the reflection, he gathered a handful of blood as it trickled from his wound, and throwing it in the air, exclaimed, "Thou hast conquered, Oh Galilean." In our own times the same has been repeatedly witnessed. Voltaire and his associates "took counsel together" and united their efforts to cast from them every tie that bound them to their Maker. With what success, let the dying agonies of Voltaire speak, when he cried for mercy to that same Being he had once called *a wretch*. And as if the more remarkably to show their failure, the very press on which Voltaire and his companions printed their infidel publications against Christ, is now employed in printing religious tracts that testify of Christ.

How can it be otherwise? They who contend against Christ contend not against men, but against God, and who may hope to succeed in such a contest? How shall finite cope with infinite, or the creatures of a day prevail against the eternal Jehovah? Who shall set the briers and thorns in array against *that God who*

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is a consuming fire, without incurring the charge of folly? Shall not he who sitteth in the heavens, laugh at their impotent rage? Shall not the Lord have them all in derision, when they seek to drag him from his throne, or alter the decrees he has established?

But it is worse than folly thus to contend with God, or to refuse obedience to his anointed. Such conduct must inevitably provoke his anger, and call forth his vengeance, and who may stand when once he is angry? *He shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.* The wrath of even an earthly king is as the roaring of a lion, but how much more terrible is that of the great King of kings, the mere blast of the breath of whose nostrils dries up the channels of the sea, and discovers the foundations of the world? 2 Sam. xxii. 16.

Thus far the prophet speaks of the folly and danger of those who resist the anointed of God. In the succeeding part of the Psalm, he shows us the firm purposes of God, respecting Christ; the honor bestowed upon him; and the authority he should possess. The Father himself speaks first, *I have set* (or as it is in the margin, *I have anointed,*) *my King upon my holy hill of Zion.* The Lord Jesus Christ is a King, and his kingdom, though *not of this world*, or not like the kingdoms of men, is yet in the world, and numbers men among its subjects. He is consecrated by God the Father, *to be head over all things, to the church*, Eph. i. 22, and he is set upon his throne so firmly, that no tumults or strivings of men, even though they rage like the boiling ocean against the rocks, can avail to overturn or render it insecure. Jehovah himself has placed him on that throne, and we may without fear imitate the apostle, who applies to him the words of the xlv. Psalm, *Thy throne, Oh God, is forever and ever*, Ps. xlv. 6.

In the seventh verse of the Psalm, the Son himself, the anointed King, is represented as speaking, *I will declare the decree.* The reference is doubtless to that eternal decree, in virtue of which he was constituted Mediator, and Saviour of the world, and as such invested with additional right to supreme authority. I say additional right, because by reason of his own divine nature, the Son always possessed equal authority with the Father. The words that immediately follow, *The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, are introductory to the *decree* which he was about to declare. Their meaning is, "I now make it publicly manifest, and proclaim it to the world that thou art my Son, like myself in the possession of the divine nature, in

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power and in glory." The reference here, is chiefly to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he was *declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*, Rom. i. 4. The resurrection of Christ was the seal of all he did, and the confirmation of all he had undertaken or promised; *for if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain*, 1 Cor. xv. 14.

The decree spoken of in the seventh verse, is contained in the eighth and ninth verses. *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.* Such is the decree respecting Christ. It was formed in the councils of the adorable Trinity, long ere the world began. It is inscribed in the eternal records of heaven. It was proclaimed by Christ himself, through the mouth of his servant David, and through other prophets during a long series of ages. It has already begun to receive its fulfilment, and every indication in the future—every lesson from the past—promises that it shall receive a glorious accomplishment. There is no nation, however remote, that shall not submit to Christ; no superstition however deeply rooted, that he shall not pluck up; and no opposition however strong, that shall not be broken by the iron rod he bears. At times it seems scarce possible that these expectations should be realized, and those who cherish them are commonly characterized as visionary enthusiasts. The enemies of Christ are numerous, and powerful, and they combine all their energies to defeat his plans. But how vain are their efforts. The decree has gone forth, and it shall be executed. Its course is like the torrent that sweeps from the mountains. The barriers that are thrown before it may obstruct it for a moment, but only till its waters have had time to rise above them, and then they add to the volume and force of the conquering flood. Flight and resistance are equally useless. *Hath God said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?* Num. xxiii. 19.

Such are the circumstances on which the exhortation of the text is founded. It is an exhortation addressed primarily to the kings and judges of the earth, inasmuch as they are most prone to think themselves exalted above even the power of him who placed them on their thrones. *Be wise now therefore oh ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice*

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with trembling. The remainder of the exhortation, which forms the text of this discourse, is equally applicable to all men; to the noble and the base, to the ruler and the subject alike. It contains in itself the gospel in miniature, being an outline of the duties to be performed, of the dangers of disobedience, and of the reward of those who believe. *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

The command, *kiss the Son*, has reference to the ancient mode of expressing, not merely affection, but the highest degree of loyalty and veneration. When David parted from good old Barzillai, he kissed him and blessed him, 2 Sam. xix. 39. This was simply a token of affection and esteem. When Samuel anointed Saul, he kissed him, 1 Sam. x. 1. This was a token of cheerful and affectionate loyalty, a profession of his willingness to be under the rule of Saul, for he said, *Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain of his inheritance?* In the ancient idolatrous worship, it was very common to show their veneration and devotion by the same token, so that it even passed into a proverb, *Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calf*, Hos. xiii. 2. All of these ideas are included more or less in the command of the text, *Kiss the Son.* Acknowledge him as your God and King, give him the veneration and devotion which some prostitute to idols. Let him reign supreme in your hearts, and serve him with that affectionate loyalty, which so beneficent a King deserves. This is not an unreasonable requisition. Were we required to show such affection and loyalty and veneration to a mere man, we might well hesitate; for what child of Adam has ever lived who deserves such submission, from all men, of all lands, and all ages? But Christ Jesus has a right, to all that we can give. In his own divinity he sits upon the throne, and the highest seraphs bow before him. Not only so, but he bears a special and peculiar relation to our world. For us he was anointed a King upon the holy hill of Zion. For us he bore the sorrows and sufferings of life on earth, and of death upon the cross. For us he rose triumphant over death and the grave,—and for us he sits at the right hand of God ever to intercede for us. Has not a being who has shown us so much love —who has done so much already, and is prepared to do still more for us—a right to claim all the tribute which our hearts can give him? And how much more is this obvious, when we consider, that there is a special and solemn command of our Creator requir-

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ing this. *All men shall honor the Son, even as they honor the Father*, John v. 23. *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*, Rom. xiv. 11.

There are many who regard this as a matter of little importance, and who not only take it for granted, but freely express the opinion, that it is scarcely worth while to be so particular on this point. They fancy that God will not much regard their want of reverence for his Son; nor will the all-merciful Saviour visit too severely any omission of duty towards himself. Whence this opinion rose, it might be hard for some to say, but certainly it finds no countenance in the words of the Psalmist. On the contrary, the very next words declare most plainly, that any failure on this point will be visited with the severest chastisement. *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry.* He will have a right to be angry, for he has a right to your devotions; and his anger is not like the anger of men, a mere puff of noisy breath, or, at most, a source of injury to our bodies. He is the God of the spirits of all flesh, and his anger, once aroused, shall burn against them forever. *Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.* How forcible are these expressions! *Lest he be angry.* The anger of man is so common, that we are not surprised at it, and generally so powerless, that we do not fear it. Not so the anger of Christ. It is a fearful thing, to think of provoking the merciful Saviour to anger. Yet it can be done, and among all the terrible expressions of the Bible, I know of none so truly awful as that one, *the wrath of the Lamb.* No wonder that men, in the vain desire to escape it, shall in that day cry to *the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. How will those who now think so lightly of the Lord Jesus, dare to look upon him when *he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

And ye perish from the way. It is a sorrowful thing, even in the affairs of this life, to lose one's road, and wander in the wilderness, or float across the ocean, until famine or fatigue cause us to perish. But infinitely more so is it to lose that only way that leads to life, and to wander among the dark mountains, until the soul perish forever. Yet to this danger all those are exposed, who provoke the anger of Christ. And think not to say, But my

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sins are comparatively insignificant, and though he may disapprove of them, he will not rouse all his anger against me. It is true he will not, for if he did, no mortal could stand for one moment. It is not needful to awaken all the anger of the Saviour. *When his anger is kindled but a little*, you shall perish from the way. The way of life—the way of joy—the way of peace—nay, even the way of hope, you can no more tread, if once his anger is kindled against you but a little.

Are such the consequences of neglect or contempt of Christ? What, then, may those expect, who pursue the contrary course, and, by a life of unceasing obedience, show that their hearts are full of affection and veneration for him? The question is easier asked, than answered. In our version, the Psalmist says, *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him;* but this by no means expresses the full force of the original. More literally, it is, *Oh, the blessednesses of those who put their trust in him!* The Psalmist is filled with admiration at the very thought of their blessings, though he does not here enumerate them. But it is easy to gather some of them from other passages of the word of God. *The Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*, Rom. x. 11. The disciples of Christ are often scorned and reviled, and many are ashamed to be called by his name. Be it so. There is a day coming, when all nations shall be assembled before his throne, and other worlds shall be spectators of the scene. There will be no shame on the faces of his disciples then, when he calls to them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34. There will be shame on the faces of those who now despise him, when the *Son of man shall be ashamed of them before his Father, and before his holy angels*, Mark viii. 38. But this blessedness is not all deferred to that distant day. Even now, *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river*, Jer. xvii. 7, 8. And amidst all the storms and tempests of this changing scene, there are blessings for him that the world knoweth not. *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. There is no peace to the wicked. But thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee*, Is. xxvi. 3.

Macao, March 31, 1844.

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SERMON XXIII.

THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE.

And he spake this parable to certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican, I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—LUKE xviii. 9–14.

DURING our Saviour's short ministry on earth, he mingled in all classes of society. The poor crowded around him to partake of his bounty, and hear his gracious words. The rich invited him to their houses, or followed in his train from curiosity, or with designs to watch and inform against him. Some came to hear his wisdom, others to see his mighty works. The Pharisee came to uphold his own cause against this new enemy, and boast of his own good deeds,—while the sinner who found pardon and peace nowhere else, came to bathe his feet with tears. He had instructions for all, for he knew what was in man, and was intimately acquainted with all their wants. Hence his instructions were always appropriate, nor need we be surprised to learn that they were often unpleasant to his hearers. He was a skilful physician to cure diseased souls; and the instruments he used were sharp, and the medicines employed were bitter. Yet unpleasant as were his words at times, he never failed to declare the whole truth to all his hearers.

Of this we have a striking example in the parable before us. It is one addressed to his contemporaries, but meant for all ages, for it combats an error that will exist as long as there shall be sinful men in the world.

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It was spoken *to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous*, who supposed that their own works were so good as to be a foundation for justification and acceptance with God. This is a most common and natural error. It has its origin in a passion strong as the love of life itself—even in that vanity which makes men utterly loathe to think meanly of themselves, or to acknowledge that they have no good works to merit the favor of God. Yet this trusting to one's own righteousness implies a most criminal ignorance of the character of God and of one's self. No one can rightly understand the purity of the nature of Jehovah, and compare it with his own wickedness, without being struck dumb with shame. Always it has been so, that those who have known most of God have been the most humble. When Abraham was allowed to commune with God in behalf of Sodom, he used expressions showing the most entire want of confidence in himself. *Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes*, Gen. xviii. 27. And when holy Job not only heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but also saw him with his eyes, then *he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes*, Job xlii. 6.

It was strange that the Pharisees, with the law of God in their hands, and all its requisitions of perfect holiness, and with the examples of their patriarchs confessing their own unworthiness, could still trust in themselves that they were righteous. Yet not only did they trust in themselves—they also *despised others;* which alone was a certain proof of their being false professors. A true child of God certainly esteems others better than himself. He knows the sinfulness of his own heart much better than he knows that of others, he feels that he is but a brand plucked from the burning, and that he may himself fall even as disgracefully as David did. How can such a one despise others, who have not enjoyed the privileges granted to him? Yet nothing is more common than for men to pride themselves on their own goodness, and esteem meanly those who do not come up to their own standard. And common as it is, nothing is more abominable to God. It is bad enough to be sinful, but it is intolerable to shut one's own eyes to a sense of sinfulness—to cover it with the false show of goodness, and to despise those less favored, and therefore perhaps more openly transgressors of the law. This is really robbing God, for it is ascribing to ourselves the praise of his gifts. To us it is hateful to hear any man say to another, stand by, for I

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am holier than thou. But to a God of infinite purity, in whose sight we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses as filthy rags, it must be an offence of unspeakable magnitude.

Our Saviour met with such conduct in every step of his public ministry. Jewish society was essentially religious, at least its forms were such, and while religion was fashionable, open sin was disreputable, and men of bad habits were outcasts. Of all the classes of Jewish society, the Pharisees were the most attentive to the outward observances of the law, and the Publicans the least. The *Pharisees sat in Moses' seat*, and expounded the precepts of his law. Their theology was correct. They believed in the existence of a God, of a future state, of rewards and punishments, and of the necessity of good works and of a blameless life. They held to all the law, and especially its rites and ceremonies, of which they were careful even to scrupulosity. No fire would they kindle on the Sabbath day—no washing of hands or of cups and platters would they omit—they *tithed mint and anise and cummin*, and many of them might boast, as did Paul, that touching the righteousness which is of the law, they were blameless. Nay, as if all this were not enough, they had added their own traditions to the law of God, and imposed additional weights on the burden which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. By these things they had made the law of God of none effect. The object of the law is, like a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ, by showing how far we come short of obeying its requisitions. But from ignorance of its true nature, they prided themselves on having obeyed it perfectly. They had a high opinion of themselves—were constantly justifying themselves, and boasting of their descent from Abraham, of their circumcision, and their keeping of the law. Some of them, like Paul before his conversion, were probably sincere, and verily thought they were doing God service; but the greater part were mere hypocrites, and utterly hateful in the sight of God. How awful were the denunciations uttered against them by our Saviour in the xxiii. of Matthew. You have seen a dark cloud as it slowly rises and overspreads the heaven. Muttering thunders roll, and then louder and louder blasts reverberate through the heavens. The vivid lightnings dart across the heavens, revealing fearfully the gloom around, and prostrating the pride of the forests. So fearful were the words of Christ, *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have*

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omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell, Matt. xxiii. 23, 27, 33.

The publicans were the lowest class in Judea, commonly they were renegade Jews, or foreigners. They were tax gatherers to the Romans, which alone was sufficient to render them odious. The Jewish nation prided themselves on having never been in bondage to any man, and after they were forced to bear the Roman yoke, it was a common subject of discussion among them, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not? Not only were they hated as being the signs and the instruments of their servitude, but they were more justly unpopular on account of their extortions, excesses, and cruelty, in exacting more than was appointed, and increasing their wealth by false accusations. Hence they were hated by all, but especially by the self-righteous Pharisees, who counted it sinful to associate with them, or partake of their food. Publicans and harlots, were terms of equal reproach, and the Pharisees saw few things in Christ to which they objected more, than his eating with publicans and sinners. Yet probably in the sight of God, the Pharisees were greater sinners than they. He sees not as man sees. He estimates sin by its principles, and by the opportunities and the light enjoyed by the person offending. It is a great mistake to suppose that those are the greatest sins which are most obvious, and most disreputable among men. They are the sins of the heart, unbelief and pride, and ambition and covetousness, which is idolatry, which God most abhors.

The Pharisees felt sure of God's favor, and despised the publicans, as persons who could have no claim or expectation of his mercies. To their eyes it seemed as though the door of heaven were set wide open for themselves, but closed against all others. In the parable, Christ shows them their mistake.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The temple was the place where all sacrifices were offered, and all public and solemn acts of worship were performed. Thither went up the tribes of Israel, for there God had promised to give peculiar tokens of his presence and favor. Its doors stood open, and none however vile were excluded. The

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worshippers took different positions, as fancy, or convenience, or self-esteem directed. Some dared not go beyond the door, while others, with confidence, advanced towards the inner temple. What varied characters were collected at times within those walls, and how varied the objects for which they came. Here was aged Simeon, ready to depart in peace having seen the salvation of the Lord, and here was the young mother come to present the customary offerings on the birth of her first born. Here was the proselyte from a distant land, and here was the Israelite with his sin-offering, or his burnt-offering, or his thank-offering. The rich and the poor met together here, for the Lord who was the maker of them both, called each alike to his temple.

It is a hazardous thing for man to attempt to read the characters of his fellows, and were we to attempt to pronounce on the characters of those who at any time stood in the temple, we should not probably judge as God does.

The Pharisee, doubtless, far within the door, *stood by himself;* he disdained to associate with the crowd, or to offer up his prayers in common with the other worshippers. But what a prayer he offered! In form it was a thanksgiving, but in fact, a boasting of his own good deeds. He enumerates his own righteousnesses with great self-complacency, as so many certificates of stock in the bank of heaven, all acquired by his own industry. He was not like other men. He was not an extortioner; he was not unjust; he was not an adulterer; he was not even as bad as the publican who had dared to come with him to the house of God. We may without hesitation admit that he spoke truly—that he had not committed these crimes. Many of the Pharisees made religion only a cloak for their covetousness, but others, in outward deportment, were blameless and sincere. Like Paul they had a zeal for God, though it was not according to knowledge. But not only was this man free from outward vices, he was also a doer of good. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess.* Probably he also gave alms to the poor, for this commonly was practised by those who fasted and paid tithes.

Such was the ground of his expectation of the favor of God—freedom from open vices and the practice of the outward acts of religion. Not a word does he say of sin—not a confession of ill-desert—not a request for mercy and grace. No mention of a Saviour, or an atonement. All is calm undoubting self-dependence. Yet it was most strange that with all the evidence to the

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contrary, he could still so confide in himself. What a contrast is there between the spirit of his prayer, and of the Psalms of David, in which we read of the *blessedness of him whose sins are covered*, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. How different his description of himself from that Jeremiah gives of the nature of man: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* Jer. xvii. 9, 10. What a different lesson was taught by the sacrifices which morning and evening were offered in that place of prayer! How then was it possible for him thus to come before God? The reason is plain. He had the law of God in his hands, and was familiar with the letter of its precepts, but its spirit he had never comprehended. He was alive without the law, for it was holy and just and good, but he was carnal and sold under sin. He knew not the plague of his own heart, and would have been as much surprised as Nicodemus was, to hear Christ say, *Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*, John iii. 3. In these respects he was a perfect picture of the greater part of men called Christians in our days. Those who are free from gross vices, who read their Bibles, and attend the house of God with regularity, consider that their lives are so meritorious that they need fear nothing. What lack I yet? is the question with which they triumphantly close their account of the grounds of their hope before God.

The Pharisee came to the temple, ostensibly to pray, but really to boast of himself. But what brought the publican there? It was no strange sight to see the Pharisee in the temple, but the Publicans commonly kept at a distance. Perhaps it was some affliction that befel him, which first led him to think of spiritual things. More probably it was the word of God, which in some way had found access to his heart, and fastened on his conscience. He had no showy virtues to build a hope upon, and he felt that within he had no ground of confidence. He knew that he was a sinner. Perhaps his views of sin were very indistinct; but he began to realize that God was an holy God, and would execute the punishment of the law upon the sinner, if some other way of escape were not found. A dreadful sound was in his ears—a voice sounded—*Flee from the wrath to come!* But whither flee? He came to the temple, if perhaps God might be gracious to him. But it was a place to which he had not been accustomed to come, and he felt as a stranger there. It was years since he had even heard a prayer. And when he came up, and saw the altar and the

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smoking sacrifices, the glittering vessels of the temple, and the priests in their priestly robes, with the worshippers around them, he was overpowered with the sense of his own unworthiness. He felt like an outcast among such men, and did not dare to come near them. Still less would he presume to come near the Pharisee, who stood so close to the mercy-seat. Accordingly, *he stood afar off.*

And if he felt unworthy to mingle with the other worshippers, or to stand on the same footing with them, how much more, when he thought of that pure and holy God unto whom he was about to address his prayer. He repented, and abhorred himself. *He did not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven*, but in sign of his deep contrition and sorrow for sin, *he smote upon his breast*, and uttered the simple, but heartfelt prayer, *God be merciful unto me a sinner.* How short, yet how expressive! His heart was borne down with the load of sin, and his whole soul deeply humbled before God. He made no attempt to conceal, or to palliate, much less to justify his evil course. His only plea was for mercy. If God were not gracious he had no hope of salvation. Like Esther when she went uncalled into the presence of Ahasuerus, his feeling was, *I will go unto the king, and if I perish, I perish,* Est. iv. 16. He reasoned like the lepers who sat before the gate of Samaria. *Why sit we here, until we die? If we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we shall die also. Now therefore come and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live, and if they kill us, we shall but die,* 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. Thus reasoned the publican, and wisely. If God should be merciful unto him, he should live, but if not, there was no other who could save him; and it was better to perish while knocking at mercy's gate, than to perish elsewhere. But none ever perished there. Thanks be unto God, he will cast out none who come unto him in Christ's name. There is hope in the cross of Christ, even for the chief of sinners; and this is the only hope, on which the publican, the thief on the cross, the persecuting Saul, and we ourselves can depend.

The publican's faltering prayer was accepted, while the boasting speech of the Pharisee was unheard and neglected. The broken voice of the first sounded like sweet music in the ears of the prayer-hearing God, but the other was discord and mockery; *and the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other.* The reason is found in that general rule of God's government,

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Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, Matt. xxiii. 12. This parable was spoken for the benefit of those who lived when Christ was on earth, and it was left on record for our instruction. The lessons we may derive from it are these.

1. External morality is not enough to secure our salvation. I know of scarce any other truth of the Bible that needs to be so constantly insisted on as this, for on almost no point are men so apt to err. The desire to justify ourselves is so strong, that even at the judgment seat of Christ, the wicked shall attempt it, Luke xiii. 25. Were a man to obey the law of God perfectly, his morality certainly would save him—he would enter heaven on his own merits. But where is such a man to be found? Where is the just man that doeth good and sinneth not? You and I, my hearers, have never yet seen such a man. All have sinned—all have gone out of the way, and how then is it possible for any of us to deserve the favor of God. If our whole duty belongs to God, and we fail in one part, will the performance of the other part make up for that which is lacking? If a man owes you ten thousand pounds, and defrauds you of one thousand, do you count him just, because he pays the other nine? Do you not rather seize him, and cast him into prison till he pays you every farthing? Is it just in you to act thus; and is it not also just in God? *Verily I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into heaven*, Matt. v. 20. Morality is good, but the reason of our salvation is found in the cross of Christ; and those who are saved by the cross, as a consequence, become moral. The Pharisees were excluded, while publicans and harlots entered. The nominal Christian is lost, while they who were heathen are saved. The one trusts in himself that he is righteous, while the other, destitute of all self-confidence, flees to the cross of Christ for shelter.

2. It is a great and grievous sin, to despise those beneath us—counting ourselves the favorites of God, and them the vessels of his wrath. Were we free from all sin, and able to search the hearts of others, we might perhaps do this with impunity; but who is there that dares to say, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou?* Is. lv. 5. Not thus did Moses and Abraham and David act—not thus did Paul and the apostles speak. This comparing of ourselves, measuring ourselves, and

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judging of ourselves, not by the word of God, but by others around us, is a bad sign, and the fruitful source of many evils. Jacob confessed himself *less than the least of all God's mercies*, Gen. xxxii. 10; and Paul declared, *I am less than the least of all saints*, Eph. iii. 8.

3. Finally. Learn hence, how precious is the grace of humility in the sight of God. Before him even the highest angels veil their faces—before him the holiest saints prostrate themselves in lowly reverence; and shall a sinful mortal presume to boast in his presence? *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, God will not despise*, Ps. li. 17, for, *though the Lord be high yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off*, Ps. cxxxviii. 6.

Pride is natural unto man, and humility distasteful, but a little self-knowledge brings down every high thought, and a little knowledge of God as he is, humbles the Christian to the very dust. Then it is that he experiences the richest blessings from his Creator. *Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*, Is. lvii. 15.

Macao, April 7, 1844.

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SERMON XXIV.

MARTHA AND MARY.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.—LUKE x. 38–42.

FROM the time that Jesus Christ entered on his public ministry, until his death upon the cross, he had no certain dwelling place. He was sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and though he probably spent more time about Jerusalem than elsewhere, yet he was constantly traversing the land with his disciples. Wherever he went he was dependent on the kindness of friends for food and for lodging; for he rarely wrought miracles to supply his own wants, and wealth he had none. *The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head*, Luke ix. 58. Among all those who ministered to him, we read of none more frequently than the family consisting of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, who lived in Bethany. This was a small village in a little valley, on the east side of Jerusalem, distant not quite two miles. The Mount of Olives lay between Jerusalem and Bethany, and hither our Saviour often resorted to spend the night, after preaching all day in the temple. When he became acquainted with this family, does not appear, nor is it important to know. Perhaps it was on the occasion mentioned in the text. Few families were ever so favored as this, for *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus, and often visited them*, John xi. 5.

It is not probable that the family were wealthy, though from the circumstances, that Mary once anointed Jesus with a box of

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precious *ointment very costly*, and that when Lazarus died, many Jews came to console the sisters, John xi. 19, xii. 3, we may suppose that they were in comfortable circumstances, and well esteemed.

On the occasion referred to in the text, Jesus and his disciples were journeying about as usual, and while they continued their course, perhaps to their friends in Jerusalem, he stopped to repose in Bethany. Martha, who was the eldest, and the head of the family, received him into her house. It was not the first time that our Lord received charity at the hands of a woman, for we read before this time, of Mary Magdalene, and Joanna the wife of Herod's steward, and Susannah, and many others, *which ministered to him of their substance*, Luke viii. 2, 3. It is here that we first read of Mary the sister of Martha. Some have confounded her with Mary Magdalene, but improperly, for the latter was of Galilee, while she was of Judea. Her name is well known, for her affection in anointing our Saviour, is spoken of for a memorial of her, wherever the gospel is preached, and all that we read of her shows her to have been a woman of deep and unaffected piety. Possessed of more softness and delicacy than Martha, with an humble and childlike spirit, she was one on whom our Lord must have looked with peculiar tenderness and affection. *She sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.* When he came to their dwelling other occupations were laid aside, and she spent her time in listening to his instructions. It is scarcely proper to say, that it is more becoming for one sex than the other, to be the childlike disciples of Christ, for all have equal need of him; and yet there is a peculiar beauty in seeing a female sitting at the feet of Christ, and learning of him who was meek and lowly in heart. A disregard of Christ is exceedingly sinful both in man and woman, but it is if possible more blameworthy in those who owe so much to the Christian religion, as the female sex does, and whose chief ornament—*even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price*, 1 Pet. iii. 4—is obtained by obedience to its precepts. The character of Mary the sister of Martha, is one the child of God delights to contemplate; but it is not Mary when weeping for Lazarus, nor even Mary when anointing Christ, that fixes the attention, so much as it is Mary when she sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

But while Mary was thus occupied, where was Martha? She also loved Jesus,—but her mind was not so spiritual as her sis-

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ter's, nor were her affections so placed on heavenly things. Martha was cumbered about much serving. In her anxiety to have everything comfortable for her guest, she suffered her mind to be drawn away, over-occupied and distracted with cares. Thus she lost an opportunity of hearing what kings and prophets had desired in vain to hear. She neglected the word of God that she might serve tables, though Christ cared little for those preparations. His meat was to do the will of him that sent him. But her cares for her household matters, had worse effects than merely occupying her own time, and preventing her from hearing the words of Christ. It also tended to draw Mary off from her chosen and delightful post; for Martha, dissatisfied that Mary rendered her no assistance at the moment, came with some emotion and complained to Christ. *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.* Strange, that one whom Christ loved, and who loved Christ, should make such a request! Strange, that a true Christian should be so anxious about trifles that perish in the using, and neglect opportunities whose fruit should last forever! It were well, if there were no followers of Martha now; but the great mass even of the Christian church, have followed her example, rather than that of Mary; even going to the length she did, in censuring those who exhibit more devotion to Christ than themselves, and seeking to draw them into a greater conformity to the world. How frequently do we hear the cry now-a-days, "Such an one is too zealous—he neglects his duties to his own family in his zeal for others." So little is the nature of true religion understood, or its superior claims appreciated, that many are ready to misapply the words of the apostle in a widely-different case, and say of those who forsake their families, and the means of enriching or aggrandizing themselves, for the cause of Christ, that they have "denied the faith, and are worse than infidels." Let all such hear the words of Christ, when he answered Martha. Her conduct was sufficiently strange, and deserved reproof; but our merciful Lord dealt very gently with her. Oh, how often was he tried with the dulness of his disciples, and the coldness of his friends! Yet, in patience and kindness, he instructed the ignorant and the wayward—bearing with their weakness and provocations, and pointing them to better things.

Instead of answering Martha directly, he kindly showed her her own mistakes, and contrasted the better course adopted by

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Mary. *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. Careful*, that is, anxious, disquieted, over-occupied. There is a carefulness that is necessary and wise, but it is not of such that Christ speaks. There is a carefulness, an anxiety about temporal things, that fills the mind, keeps thoughts of heaven out, and causes the affections to grovel on earth. It is a carefulness that so employs the mind, as to choke the thoughts of heavenly things—a carefulness which Christ compares to the thorns that choked the seed and rendered it unfruitful. Even so do the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, prevent divine truth from having its due effect upon the heart.

We are so dependent on our food and raiment, not only for comfort, but even for life, that it seems natural to make these the objects of our most careful and constant attention. The wants of the body are felt, and must be supplied; and the habit of attending to them so grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength, that we constantly give them the first place, and suffer the interests of the soul to lie neglected. The main question becomes, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed? After all these things do the nations seek. But experience shows that much uncertainty attends our efforts to gain as much of these things as we want. Hence, the mind that makes them the objects of its chief attention, becomes anxious about them. The appearance of failure, or even of partial want of success, is the signal for anxious cares to awake and vex the mind. And the more of these uncertainties there are, the more is the mind troubled. Such, to some extent, was Martha's case. She was careful about many things, and therefore she was *troubled about many things.* So it is in life. The more wealth, the more cares. The more sources of enjoyment, the more doors for sorrow to enter. Martha sought to have everything comfortable around her, and set her heart upon obtaining this; but on the contrary, she found that her cares only added to her troubles. It can scarcely be otherwise. The wise man has told us *there be many things which increase vanity*, Ecc. vi. 11, many things which trouble us, if we set our hearts upon them. Does a man delight in wealth? Behold, his riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Does he delight in friends and relatives? One by one he sees them fall around him. Does he seek to get a name for himself among men? Behold, man being in honor abideth not. He is like the beasts

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which perish, for both must lie down alike in the dust. How unwise, then, is it to place the affections on those things which, at best, are unsatisfying, and which perish in the using. However much we love them, our interest in them cannot endure, for in the midst of our cares they disappear, or else we ourselves depart.

Ye that are careful and troubled about many things, hear the words of Christ to Martha, *One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.* One thing is needful, all others are superfluities, but this you must have or perish forever. Look narrowly into all the walks of life —examine carefully whatever the world contains that is good or great—ascend into heaven—descend into the deeps—prove all things—but still you will find the words of Christ are true. *But one thing is needful.* So David found it, for he said, *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*, Ps. xxvii. 4. So Solomon found it, for he says, *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man*, Ecc. xii. 13. So Asaph found it, for he said, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee*, Ps. lxxiii. 25.

It was life eternal which Christ spoke of, as the one thing needful; and surely one moment's candid consideration will prove the truth of his remark. What is your life that you now live, and for which you take so many cares? Will it last forever? Is it not even a vapor which passeth away? A moment here, and the next, in eternity. And shall this temporary state of being, with its minute and transitory cares, and its fading enjoyments, outweigh the solemn and unending interests of an eternal existence? Is that man wise who neglects the awful future that he may enjoy the present moment—nay, who not merely neglects the future, but vexes even the present with useless cares?

Observe the manner in which he speaks of Mary's conduct. She hath *chosen* the good part. Whatever may be said of God's absolute sovereignty, nothing is more certain, than that eternal life and eternal death are set before every man for his choice,—and according to his choice will be his condition. When Moses had rehearsed the law to Israel, he solemnly called upon them to decide on the course they should take, *I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live*, Deut.

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xxx. 19. That same alternative, *life or death, blessing or cursing*, is set before each of us; and none of you, my hearers, can avoid making some choice. If you do not choose life, you certainly do choose death. If you postpone the choice you in effect choose death, and who can tell how soon you shall receive your choice?

Mary had chosen *the good part*, emphatically good, and the only one that deserves that name. *What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Matt. xvi. 26. The part that Mary had chosen was good, because it included all possible good. The Lord, and his salvation was the object of her choice. And may not all who make such a choice, say with the Psalmist, *The Lord is my portion, I have a goodly heritage*, Ps. xvi. 5, 6. What can he possibly want, who has the Lord for his friend? God is a satisfying portion to all those who put their trust in him. Even in this world it is found to be so. You may come to the streams of earthly enjoyment, and drink even to satiety, and your thirst shall return again; but it is not so with the enjoyment of God. The Christian is never cloyed with the favor of God. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria, *Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water, springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14.

The world looks upon religion as a gloomy, unpleasant thing, but why should it be so esteemed? Is the sense of pardoned sins and peace with God unpleasant? Does it cause gloom and sadness to be assured that sin shall not have dominion over us, and we shall not fall into condemnation? Is the knowledge of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasury of wisdom, and whose instructions shed light into the darkened soul, no source of delight? Is the matchless love of God, as displayed in the plan of redemption, through our Lord Jesus Christ, no fountain of joy? Alas! it is ignorance alone that would start such an objection, for he who is truth itself, has declared the part which Mary chose, to be the only good part; and its principal excellency consists in this, that it is permanent, and endless. *It shall never be taken away from her.* There are many that would gladly snatch it away. The roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour —the ensnaring world, in the net of whose allurements so many are entangled and destroyed—the deceitful heart, which causes so many more to perish—all these would snatch away the good part,

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which the child of God hath chosen. But they cannot do it, for it is preserved for him, by the same power which first placed it within his reach. The faithfulness of God is pledged to preserve all those that put their trust in him; and however he may suffer their faith to be tried, or their enemies to gain temporary advantages over them, he will not forget his promises, nor suffer the portion they have chosen to be taken away. They have a *treasure in the heavens that faileth not. Where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth*, Luke xii. 33. They have an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them*, 1 Pet. i. 4. *And neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, can separate them from it*, Rom. viii. 38. Such was the part which Mary had chosen. She sat at Jesus' feet and heard his words. We know what those words were, for the great subject of all Christ's ministry, was ever his mediatorial work. He spake of his life—he spake of his union with the Father—of his love for man—and of his purpose to die, on his behalf. He foretold his glorious resurrection, and his ascension to heaven. He showed the nature of the kingdom he was about to establish; that it was founded in the hearts of men, and demanded a spiritual service; that it required repentance for sin, and faith in himself; that it promised grace and glory; and that no good thing should be withheld. Such were the ordinary topics of Christ's discourses. Such, doubtless, were his words to Mary, and they fell on her heart like seed on the good ground, that produced fruit an hundred-fold, springing up unto everlasting life. And there too, were the things that Martha neglected. She was cumbered about much serving; busied about trifles that gave her more pain than pleasure, while the Lord of life and truth was a guest in her house, and equally ready to impart to her, as to her sister, those glorious things which the Lord alone could reveal—*for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things he hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

May God grant, that all of us, sitting like Mary at Jesus' feet, may have grace to choose that good part which shall never be taken away from us.

Macao, April 28, 1844.

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SERMON XXV.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.— LUKE xvi. 19–31.

Never man spake like this man, was the exclamation with which some of the hearers of Jesus Christ once retired from his presence. It was an exclamation that must have been often uttered during his ministry, for never was there a preacher like him. No man like him *had come down from heaven*. No man like him *knew what was in man*. No man like him could withdraw the veil that covered the unseen world, and paint its realities before his hearers. He speaks, and lo! the heavens are opened, and we behold the angels rejoicing over the conversion of the returning penitent. He speaks, and time and distance have fled away, and we behold all nations gathered before him to judgment. He speaks, and the veil that covers the hearts of men is removed,

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and we behold their secret thoughts, and the first emotions of the soul. It is on account of this vividness and distinctness, that the great masters of the art of painting, have so often selected the actions and the descriptions of Christ, as subjects for their pencils. The account in the words just read, is a striking example of the clearness with which our Saviour presented eternal things to his hearers. It is common to speak of it as the "parable of the rich man and Lazarus"—but why it should be called a parable, if by parable is meant a fictitious story, does not appear. It is not called a parable by the evangelist, nor have we any intimation, that it is not to be considered as an historical fact, describing the characters and conditions of persons who have actually existed. The Rationalists of Germany, who would divest religion entirely of its supernatural character, tell us that this account is not to be understood literally,—but the solid piety and sound sense of the Reformers, led them to consider it as the narration of events that actually occurred. This opinion I am inclined to regard as the correct one, although in either case, whether we regard it as a parable or an actual event, the instructions to be derived from the account are precisely the same. To these instructions, which are of personal interest and solemn importance to each one of us, I request your serious attention.

The persons described in the narration are taken from the extremes of society. The one is a rich man, who has everything that heart can desire. He has health and wealth, sumptuous raiment and delicate food, and the fear of want never entered his mind. The other is a beggar, clothed with rags, and covered with sores; far from having abundance of food, he desired only the crumbs of the rich man's table, and instead of kind attentions in his misery, the dogs came and licked his sores. Nothing bad is said concerning the rich man. It is no crime to be wealthy, nor is it wrong for the rich to enjoy the good things God has given them. That he was uncharitable, or refused the crumbs from his table, to Lazarus, does not appear from the words of Christ. All that we can justly infer, from what is said of him, is, that his heart was set upon the world; he took it for his portion, and was satisfied with its enjoyments, and neither thought nor cared for a future life. What a contrast was here! The rich man and Lazarus were both men, both probably descendants of Abraham; but while one rolled in wealth and pleasure, the other was exercised with poverty and pain. The one received good

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things, and the other evil things. Were this the only life that men live, it might be hard to reconcile the impartiality and justice of God, with this unequal distribution of good and evil. Indeed those who are accustomed to look only on earthly things, do often take occasion from these outward distinctions, to arraign the justice of God, as though he were a respecter of persons. But let us look farther. This life is only introductory to another, and perhaps we may find that the apparent distinctions of this life, are all adjusted in that which is to come.

It came to pass in process of time, that the beggar died. No mention is made of his burial. He was a common pauper, and probably his body was hurried to a pauper's grave, with none to lament over him, or raise a monument for him. But though neglected and forgotten by men, he was not so lightly esteemed by angels. Though homeless and sorrowing on earth, there was an inheritance prepared for him in heaven. The last breath had scarcely left his body, ere a convoy of angels were around him to convey his soul to *Abraham's bosom.* As Abraham is called the *Father of the faithful,* the expression *carried to Abraham's bosom,* may mean, that the beggar, who imitated his faith, was carried to heaven, like a child to the bosom of its father, when the day draws to a close. More probably, however, the reference is to the Jewish custom of feasting, where the guests reclined at the banquet, and the favored guest, lying next to him who occupied the highest place, reposed his head in his bosom. Thus Lazarus, despised and forgotten by men, was promoted to a seat with Abraham in heaven. How sudden and great the change in his condition! One moment looking on scenes of sin and suffering, the next his eyes opened on the glory and holiness of heaven; one moment thankful for the crumbs of a rich man's table, and the next feasting at the banquet of the great King of kings; one moment despised and forsaken by men, with only the dogs to relieve his misery; and the next associating with angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, forever relieved of all suffering and sorrow, and remembering his former misery, only to enhance his present joy.

The rich man also died, for wealth does not bribe death, nor the splendor of a palace keep him at a distance. *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to the grave,* Job xxi. 13. The rich man had been great on earth, and when he died he was buried, doubtless, with much parade. The mourners went

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about the street, and he was laid in state in his magnificent tomb. Those who passed by it, pointed to it, and spoke of the wealth and greatness he once possessed, though perhaps few of them asked what became of the soul, when the body was buried. It would have been presumptuous for us to have spoken of the state of his soul, had not Christ, before whom hell is opened, and destruction and the pit have no covering, revealed it to us. *In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.*

There are some in our days, whose sensibilities are so exquisite, that they are shocked to hear of hell, and of the endless punishment of the wicked. It is a favorite subject of complaint against faithful ministers of the gospel, that they dwell so much on the danger of the soul's perishing forever, and the miseries of the damned. Let all such consider the words of Christ, and the conduct of the apostles. It is the apostle Paul who says, *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*, 2 Cor. v. 11; and who speaks of the *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries*, Heb. x. 27. It is James who says, *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you*, James v. 1. It is Peter who speaks of those *whose judgment lingereth not, and whose damnation slumbereth not, and who shall utterly perish in their own corruption*, 2 Pet. ii. 3, 12. It is John, the beloved disciple, who tells us of the *second death, and that whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire*, Rev. xx. 15. But in all the New Testament, it is Jesus Christ who speaks most frequently, clearly, and fearfully of hell, and judgment, and eternal death. When he declares that the wicked *shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth*—that the wicked *shall go away into everlasting punishment*—that *their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*—when he repeats it, *their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*—and when, yet again he repeats it, *their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*—who is there so bold as to imagine he means not what he says, or to censure his ministers who imitate his example, and with sorrowing hearts declare that *the wages of sin is death?* Matt. xxii. 13, xxv. 46, Mark ix. 44, 46, 48, Rom. vi. 23.

The rich man died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. It would seem from this, that though heaven and hell are far apart, yet the inhabitants of the one can occasionally be-

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hold those of the other, and even hold some intercourse with them. What the modes of communication are between spirits, or how the rich man and Abraham could converse when *afar off*, we know not. It is not to be supposed that the soul, when freed from the body, is as much confined, and incapable of expansion, as it now is. We shall have much to learn when freed from the clogs of the body, and much that now we never conceive of, shall become known to us. The rich man had never seen Abraham, yet he knew him at once. If he had seen Lazarus at all, it was only in rags and wretchedness, yet he recognized him in all his glory and happiness. What a change was there in the condition of the two, in so short a time! The beggar who had lain at his gate, covered with sores, and begging for the crumbs from his table, was exalted to heaven, while the rich man, who had been clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, was thrust down to hell, and, in agony, crying to that very beggar for relief. *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.* The nature of the torments of the damned, we do not very clearly understand. A spirit of course cannot feel material fire; and though when the bodies of the lost are raised, and re-united to their souls, they will doubtless be capable of suffering, yet that is a low idea of the terrible justice of God, which supposes that the chief sufferings of the enemies of God are not spiritual. The common comparison in the Scriptures to represent those sufferings, is fire, which inflicts upon us the acutest sufferings we can endure; but it is *fire prepared for the devil and his angels*, and as they are purely spiritual beings, the fire that torments them must be chiefly that which a spirit can feel. But the remorse, the stings of conscience, and the gnawings of despair, joined to the insupportable sense of all the happiness they have lost, and the crushing sense of the wrath of God forever and ever—oh, these are far more dreadful than any mere bodily pains. These are the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. You have heard of the remorse that Cranmer suffered, when he had been induced to deny his religion. You have heard how, when he was led to the stake, he held out his right hand, and thrust it in the flames. The sufferings of that hand in perishing were not equal to the sufferings that his soul endured, for what that hand had done. How much more acute must be the sorrows of him who has lived in pleasure

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and wantonness, forgetting God, neglecting his salvation, trifling away his day of grace, and sinking at last to endless perdition. Such an one will need no addition of bodily torment, to fill up the measure of his cup of bitterness,—for the consciousness of what he is, joined to the remembrance of what he was, and the thought of what he might have been, will make it overflow.

The petition of the rich man to Abraham, is the only example we have in the Scriptures of a prayer addressed to a saint in heaven, and its success was not such as to encourage us to renew the experiment. He prayed to one, who, though the father of the faithful, and honored in heaven, had no power to help him. The rich man had worded his petition to Abraham in such a way as to remind him that he was one of his descendants, *Father Abraham*, and the patriarch acknowledged the relation, calling him *Son;* but alas, what did his descent from Abraham, and his circumcision avail him? Did it not rather aggravate his misery, that he had once been in outward connection with the people of God, and was now joined with the heirs of wrath? Was it not an additional pang to reflect that he had once stood before the opened door of heaven, and by his own negligence had now fallen into the depths of hell? Abraham replied to his prayer, but he gave him no encouragement to hope for the slightest relief from his sufferings. *Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Remember!* Oh, could the *spirits in prison* but lose the gift of memory, how it would lighten the load they bear! But the memory becomes stronger after death, and they shall look back as the rich man did, and recall all the mercies they ever enjoyed. They shall remember how many offers of salvation were held out to them, all of which were neglected—how many means of grace were granted to them—how many prayers and sermons they heard—how many Sabbaths —checks of conscience, warnings, and reproofs—all shall come up to the mind, as it were only yesterday. They shall remember all the good things of this life that God gave them, and curse their folly in making these their portion, and neglecting the infinitely more precious good things of the life to come, which they might have had for the asking. *Remember!* yes, they shall remember all, but it shall only be to heighten their misery, and deepen their despair. This world and heaven were set before them, for their choice, and they shall have none to reproach but themselves as

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they *remember* that they chose this world, and despised eternal life. Abraham also informed the rich man, that now there was no possible hope for him. His day of grace was past. *Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.* Ponder these words carefully, for they contain subjects of infinite importance. Though heaven and hell are so situated, that the inhabitants of the one may occasionally behold those of the other, there is no intercourse, there is no transfer of residence from one to the other. *Where the tree falleth there it must lie,* Ec. xi. 13. There is a mighty chasm between the two—*a great gulf,* and it is *fixed,* and no created power can span it. These words contain a distinct declaration of the doctrine, that the states of the righteous and the wicked in the world to come are fixed and unchangeable; that whilst the happiness of the one is everlasting, the misery of the other is unending. It is in vain to cry out against this as a hard saying. It is the sentence of our Judge, registered in the eternal records, *and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* The rich man felt the truth of what Abraham said, and hope died away in his heart. He had no expectation of obtaining any, even the least mitigation of his torments, but he dreaded their increase. He had five brethren, and he feared lest they also should come to the same place of torment. If they came, he knew they would reproach him for not having set them a better example on the earth, and he feared that their presence would increase his own sufferings. Therefore he besought Abraham to send Lazarus, to testify to them, that being warned in time, they might avoid his dreadful end. Again was his request refused. *Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.* They have testimony and warning sufficient, why send them more? But the rich man was not so put off. His own sense of eternal things since he had entered on them, was far more vivid than while he was on the earth. He too had Moses and the prophets, and he had neglected them; but now when he knew, by his own experience, what it was whereof they spake, he had different views. Thus it always is. One hour's experience of eternity will teach more than all the preaching even of the apostle Paul. Therefore the man reiterated his request. *Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent.* Let Lazarus go to them. Let him with the tongue of an immortal, tell them the blessedness he enjoys,

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and the misery I endure, and surely they will repent. Their hearts shall be moved with fear, and they will flee from the wrath to come. How common is this feeling! How often do men think—nay, how often do they say, "If we had only seen Christ. If we had witnessed his miracles. If we had seen the dead raised—if a dead man were to come now and converse with us, surely we should believe and be saved." There be many whose consciences are somewhat awakened, and who hesitate to believe and obey the gospel, because they wish for more evidence than they now possess, and think, that they too must see signs and wonders ere they can believe. Hear the words with which Abraham replied to the rich man's reiterated plea. *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* As if he had said, They have ample evidence. The Scriptures in their hands are abundantly sufficient. The motives there presented are strong enough. The sight of one who rose from the dead, though it might alarm them, would not persuade them. And is it not so? What greater witness could they have than they already possessed? *They* had Moses and the prophets, and we have Moses and the prophets, and the apostles, and the words of Christ himself. These we profess to believe. Why then seek additional testimony and additional revelations? Would you receive the testimony of a man who rose from the dead? But *the witness of God is greater*, 1 John v. 9. Has not experience shown that even the rising from the dead is not sufficient to persuade men? Did not the Jews in the time of Christ say, *If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets*, Matt. xxiii. 30. Yet when that great prophet came, of whom Moses spake, did they not go about to kill him? He raised Lazarus from the dead, and they saw him, and conversed with him. Were they persuaded by what he told them? Nay, did they not *consult to put Lazarus also to death*, even after he had risen from the dead, John xii. 10. And did they not crown all their wickedness by crucifying the Lord of glory, even after all his wonderful works, which they had seen?

We have looked into the eternal world. The doors have been opened to us by him who holds *the keys of death and of hell*, Rev. i. 18. Whether the narrative we have been considering be a mere parable, or an actual history, it matters not, the truths taught are precisely the same. We have seen

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the glory that awaits the child of God in heaven, even though his life on earth may have been full of sorrow. We have seen the torments of him, who in his ease and luxury forgot God. We have seen the hopeless despair with which he heard the words of the patriarch, to whom he vainly applied for relief. His day of grace was passed. He had lived in pleasure on the earth, he had grasped the good things that were within his reach, and God gave him his heart's desire, but sent a curse into his soul.

I have but one remark to make in conclusion. Christ has set before us the final lot of these two men, that we may see which to choose and which to shun. Most certain it is, that we shall either recline with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, or lie with the rich man in hell. The Bible speaks of no middle place. Would you choose the former, and shun the latter? You have Moses, and the apostles, to show you how it may be done, and there is no other, and shall be no other instruction. No man shall come from the dead—no angel shall descend from heaven—no miracle shall be wrought—no "signs" shall be seen. It is by the *foolishness of preaching*, and the reading of the word of God, that men shall be saved, and if these are not sufficient then there is no hope, and we must lie down in sorrow. But blessed be God, this is amply sufficient. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, 2 Tim. iii. 16–17.

Macao, May 5, 1844.

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SERMON XXVI.

BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—MATT. iii. 13–17.

THERE were many wonderful events in the history of the Jewish nation, and among these were some that stirred up all the feelings of the whole people, and were handed down from father to son as things worthy of everlasting remembrance. But probably nothing in their whole history excited so deep a sensation as the ministry and preaching of John the Baptist. He came at the most eventful crisis in their history. They *understood by books* that the time for the advent of their Messiah was drawing near. They had seen the sceptre gradually departing from Judah—where then was the promised Shiloh? Gen. xlix. 10. The seventy weeks of Daniel were drawing to a close—where was *Messiah the Prince?* Dan. ix. 27. Day after day, old Simeon went up to the temple, *waiting for the consolation of Israel, for it had been revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's anointed*, Luke ii. 27. Night and day did Anna *speak of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem*, Luke ii. 38. The miraculous birth of John was well known. Who had not heard of the vision of his father Zacharias in the temple, of his sudden dumbness, of the conception of Elizabeth, when she was past the age of child-bearing; and of the loosing of his father's tongue when he had written, *his name is John?* Luke i. 1–63. *All these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea*, Luke i. 65.

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John grew up, and though it was in the desert, yet his frugal fare, and the sanctity of his life, recalling the remembrance of his great prototype, who called down fire from God, and went up to heaven in a whirlwind, made him the object of great attention. *He came preaching in the wilderness of Judea*, and his words ran through the nation like an electric shock. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan*, Matt. iii. 5.

It was not strange that such an excitement should attend his preaching. The minds of the people were strung to the highest pitch of expectation, and he was a man prepared of God, expressly for the occasion. So important was his mission in the eyes of God, that a special prophecy foretold his coming. *Behold the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*, Is. xl. 3. The eye of Jesus Christ had seen the mighty men of every age and every land. He knew the characters of Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Solomon, as well as of Alexander, and Cæsar, but he passed them all by, and threw them in the shade, with his emphatic *Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist*, Matt. xi. 11.

He was the forerunner of Christ, and came to prepare his way, as all who preach Christ must do, by preaching repentance for sin. His voice was heard, and as one man the nation rose up to meet him. The self-righteous Pharisee, the skeptical Sadducee, the abandoned Publican, and the mercenary soldier, went out, and were baptized of him in Jordan. So great was the impression his appearance and discourse produced, that *men mused in their hearts, whether he were not the Christ*, Luke iii. 15; and even the priests and the Levites were sent from Jerusalem to ask who he was, John i. 19. But he was not the Christ. His mission was only introductory. It made nothing perfect. It pointed to Christ. *John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*, Acts xix. 4. And in proportion as Christ became the object of greater attention, was John less followed, but this was no grief to him. When his disciples came to him saying, *Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth and all men come to him*, his answer was, *My joy therefore is fulfilled, he must increase, but I must decrease*, John iii. 26. 30.

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After John had preached some six months, or more, the public ministry of Christ commenced, and he began it with an open acknowledgment of the work and mission of his forerunner. *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.* Our Lord was now about thirty years of age, which was the time appointed by the Levitical law when the priests and public instructors should commence their service. He had lived in Galilee in obscurity, and notwithstanding the star which proclaimed his birth, and his appearing in the temple at the age of twelve years, the people seem to have had little suspicion of the greatness of him who tabernacled among them. But now the way was prepared, and when all the people were baptized, Luke iii. 21, and by their baptism had solemnly professed their readiness to receive him whom John preceded, he came to be publicly acknowledged by John, and to enter on his work.

Although, according to the human nature of Christ, he was a relation of John the Baptist, yet the latter appears not to have been personally acquainted with him. He was, however, revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, John i. 31, 33, and when Christ came and asked to be baptized, his great forerunner at first declined. Greatest of all the sons of men, he felt himself so far inferior to our Lord, that he was not worthy even to bear his shoes, as a servant after him. How, then, could he presume to confer on him the rite of baptism? *John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* This is a remarkable saying, and coming, as it does, from a man inspired of God, is worthy of careful consideration. John the Baptist was sanctified even from his mother's womb, and in the sanctity of his life surpassed even the holiest of the ancient saints. Yet he felt that he *had need* of Christ. Who, then, of all them that are born of woman, has no need of Christ? Who, then, of sinful men must not look to him for salvation? or what name can there be under heaven wherein we can trust, other than that of Jesus of Nazareth? If the holy Baptist felt and expressed his need of Christ, let us also acknowledge the same want, and flee to him for shelter.

The objection made by John to baptizing Christ, was most natural, but it was overruled by our Saviour. *Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness; then he suffered him.* It is not at first sight very clear why Christ wished to be baptized by John, or how he thereby fulfilled all righteousness.

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The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance for sin, and those who received it professed their faith in the coming Messiah; but Christ had no sins to repent of, and he was himself the promised Messiah. He could not, therefore, receive baptism in the ordinary sense in which the Jews received it. But the object of our Lord, in being baptized by John, was twofold. He wished, in the first place, to put honor on the ministry of his forerunner, by acknowledging thus publicly his divine mission. On various occasions he testified to the greatness of John, but never so emphatically as when he bowed before him in the sacred ordinance of baptism. He wished to receive this rite from the hands of John, in the second place, because it was his solemn inauguration into his own public ministry. It was, so to speak, the oath of office by which he publicly pledged himself to the performance of the duties which, as Mediator, he had undertaken. It was *becoming*, therefore, that John should administer the ordinance to him. When one of the monarchs of the earth assumes the crown and ascends the throne, the highest of his future subjects administers the coronation oath. So when Christ assumed his mediatorial work on earth, he, than whom no greater had ever been born of woman, inducted him into his office. It was, indeed, chiefly for this purpose that he was raised up, and, having accomplished this, the star of his brightness speedily set. The sun was now risen in the east, and the morning star, which heralded his approach, disappeared.

Our Lord was baptized, and went up straightway from the water. It was then that there was made one of the most remarkable manifestations of the Godhead, of which our world has ever been the witness. *Lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Let us for a moment consider the scene presented. *It was in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing*, John i. 28. It was not a thickly-settled country, but crowds now occupied it, attracted thither by the fame of the great messenger of God. Already he had given his testimony concerning Christ, who was so soon to come. And now the people were in expectation, Luke iii. 15. *John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*, John i. 29. He baptizes him in presence of all the people, and whilst they behold, the heavens are opened, and

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they look far up into those blue depths hard by the throne of God. Even while they gaze, a *bodily form*, like a dove, Luke iii. 22, descends, approaches the newly-baptized Saviour, and lights upon him. And whilst they look on this, behold another wonder. A voice from heaven rings out, clear and distinct as the trumpet that once sounded on Sinai, but without its tones of terror, and proclaims, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

The two circumstances most remarkable in this account, are, the descent of the Spirit, and the testimony of God in behalf of Christ. That there was a bodily appearance, *as of a dove*, is distinctly stated. This is an important fact to be borne in mind, but our chief concern is with the import of the action.

The dispensation under which we live is often and justly called the dispensation of the Spirit. The ancient Jewish law, with its varied rites and ceremonies, was very imposing, *but it had only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those things,* Heb. x. 1; and those who ministered at its altar served *unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.* But now Christ is come, *having obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as he is the mediator of a better covenant, which is established upon better promises*, Heb. viii. 6. That better covenant, and those better promises, are due to the gift of the Holy Spirit, which all those receive who believe on Christ. Without the gift of the Spirit there is no spiritual life—there would be no spiritual church, nor could any of our race ever enter heaven. This gift of the Spirit was purchased by Jesus Christ when he died upon the cross; it was first copiously given when cloven tongues appeared and sat upon the head of the apostles on the day of Pentecost; and it has been communicated to the church more or less freely down to the present time, and shall be continued in her until the final consummation of all things. So needful is this gift of the Spirit to the welfare of the church, that Christ did not scruple to tell his sorrowing disciples, that it was more necessary than his own bodily presence. *It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you*, John xvi. 7.

Christ then being the giver of this great gift, it behooved him to be plenteously endowed with the same himself. Accordingly, we find a long line of prophecies, distinctly marking out Christ's pre-eminence in this respect, and equally distinct testimonies

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from the New Testament, showing that the Father gave not the Spirit by measure to him, John iii. 34. It was of him Isaiah spake, when he said, *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom, and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord*, Is. xi. 2. There is another prophecy of Isaiah (lxi. 1) still more distinct, which cannot be better quoted, than in the words of the evangelist Luke. *And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to them that are blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*, Luke iv. 14–22.

Since Christ is thus the mediator of a covenant whose grand characteristic is, that it is spiritual, it was peculiarly appropriate, that on his entering on his public work, this should be plainly signified. Hence, when he was baptized, the Spirit descended, in bodily form like a dove, and in the eyes of all, lighted upon him; nor was he ever after without the Spirit's presence. The Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto him. He himself bestowed the gift of the Spirit with a boundless liberality. When he rose from the dead, he came to his disciples, and, breathing on them, said, *Receive the Holy Ghost*, John xx. 22. And how full and rich were the gifts they received when the Spirit was poured upon them from on high on the day of Pentecost. *To one was given by the Spirit the word of wisdom: to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit: to another faith by the same Spirit: to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit: to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*, 1 Cor. xii. 8–11. How long these mirac-

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ulous gifts continued in the primitive church is uncertain. They were bright and dazzling manifestations. But there were other gifts of the same Spirit, even more precious, which are still given to the church; and which even now are her glory and her crown —for *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance*, Gal. v. 22, 23. No tongue can express the excellency of these gifts. Where then shall we seek their origin? Yet why ask the question? They can come only from him on whom the Spirit lighted at his baptism; and who by his death purchased the right to bestow the Spirit's influences when and how he would.

It is too common in our days to think lightly of the work of the Spirit in the church. There are many who say, that all this talk of supernatural impressions, and influences of the Spirit in religion, is mere enthusiasm. I have not so learned the Scriptures. On the contrary, the words of Christ are as emphatic and as true now, as when they were first spoken to Nicodemus, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 5; and the words of Paul are as applicable to the Christian church now, as they were when first spoken to the Corinthians. *We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12; and that other declaration of the same apostle's, is as full of solemn meaning as ever, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9.

The field of thought, on which we are led to enter, by the consideration of the descent of the Spirit on Christ, when he was baptized, is one of boundless interest, and importance, but at present it must be passed over without further remark.

The baptism of Christ was signalized, not only by the descent of the Holy Spirit, but by one of those remarkable testimonies from God the Father, which Christ received several times during his public ministry. *Lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This same testimony was given to our Lord, on the occasion of his transfiguration, when none but Peter and James and John were present to hear it, Matt. xvii. 5. A similar testimony was also given him near the close of his public ministry, when he prayed, *Father, glorify thy name. Then there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again*, John xii. 28.

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The account contained in the verses we have been considering furnishes several practical and doctrinal truths.

1. We have here a distinct recognition of the sublime and mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. There is a voice from heaven—there is the Spirit descending—there is the Saviour on the earth—and each of these are represented as distinct persons. We do not adduce this passage as a proof of the essential divinity either of the Holy Ghost, or of the Son; that is proved elsewhere. It is sufficient to quote this account, to show, that while these three persons are intimately joined together, they have a distinct personality, that the Spirit is not a mere influence, nor the Son a different name for the Father. The objection will doubtless be urged, that this is an incomprehensible doctrine. But it will be time to answer such an objection, when he who brings it can explain the mysteries of his own nature, or the union between his own soul and body.

2. While the account in question reveals to us something concerning the nature of the Trinity, it is yet more interesting as showing us the union and harmony of the Godhead in all that relates to the redemption of our race. The counsels of the glorious Trinity from eternity, had reference to the salvation of man; and in the plan of redemption, it is the Father who sends the Son—it is the Son who dies to redeem—and it is the Holy Ghost who applies the purchased salvation. In all this, there was and is the most perfect harmony between the persons of the Godhead. The same infinite intelligence directed all, and the great work went on to its completion through the united power, wisdom, and love of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Divine revelation assures us that between the persons of the Trinity the most perfect harmony and love has ever existed, John i. 1, 2, 18. Prov. viii. 14–36. Col. i. 12, 13. John xvii. and it is not a little interesting to find that every such revelation that is given to us, is given in connection with the divine purposes regarding our salvation. Does the Father declare his love for the Son? it is when the Son is fulfilling the work he had undertaken for our race. Does the Son profess his affection for the Father, and delight in him? it is when he is most actively employed in securing our salvation. Are clear revelations given to us of the nature and office of the Holy Spirit? it is when he is spoken of as the Comforter, and Sanctifier of those whom the Father loved and the Son redeemed. And all this leads us to an important practical reflec-

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tion. Is the ever glorious and blessed Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, thus earnestly and affectionately engaged in working out the redemption of our race? then surely it is no light or unimportant matter in which the Triune God is thus engaged. We may think it a light matter to work out our salvation, but it was not so esteemed in the counsels of eternity. Surely that which calls forth the thoughts, and the energies of all the persons of the Godhead, must be an occasion of chief magnitude, and should be so regarded by us. Let us then say with the Psalmist, *The redemption of the soul is precious,* Ps. xlix. 8; and let us obey the exhortation of the apostle, *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure,* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Finally, let us hence draw consolation and encouragement. Is one glorious Trinity thus engaged in the work of redemption? then surely it cannot fail. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The power of Satan shall not bring to naught what God has decreed. Let us therefore trust in God with unshrinking confidence, and *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator,* 1 Pet. iv. 19. *His counsel shall stand, he will do all his pleasure,* Is. xlvi. 16. We may therefore trust, and not be afraid.

MACAO, June 16, 1844

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SERMON XXVII.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF RICHES.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.—1 Tim. vi. 17–19.

The author of the epistle from which these words are taken, was the apostle Paul. After our Lord Jesus Christ, he was the greatest inspired teacher of the Christian Church, and his words come to us clothed with divine authority. The person to whom the epistle was addressed, was Timothy, the chosen friend, and bosom companion of the apostle. He was also a minister of the everlasting gospel, and had the charge of souls, for which charge he was to render an account, not to man, but to God. For his guidance, this epistle was written, and it is filled with directions as to the manner in which he might best perform the duties devolving upon him. Nothing can exceed the solemnity of the charges laid upon him by the apostle. But the epistle was not written for Timothy alone; it was intended for all who, like him, are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation; and its charges are as binding on all such now, as when first given to Timothy himself. Bear with me therefore, when in obedience to the command of the apostle, I explain his words, and charge you who are rich, not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.

The charge here given is specially for the rich. *Charge them that are rich in this world.* Yet it is difficult to say who are included in it. It is hard to say what amount of this world's goods constitutes wealth. Who can tell what riches are? Who is ever satisfied with what he already possesses? One man esteems riches to consist in the possession of ten or a hundred pounds;

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while another calls himself poor with thousands and tens of thousands. But perhaps we shall not greatly err, if we say that by *the rich,* the apostle means all those who possess more than a competency of the good things of this world. If you possess more than is absolutely necessary for the comforts and conveniences of life—if you are placed above the reach of want, and have a reasonable prospect of so continuing—then you may consider yourselves as included in the class intended by the apostle. If this be allowed, then the greater part if not the whole of this audience are here addressed. Look over the world in which we dwell. Compare your condition with that of three fourths of our race, and it will be found that the great majority of men will say of us, that we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.

There is a deep and solemn meaning in the expression used by the apostle, when he says, *rich in this world,* for it implies that they who possess much of this world's wealth, may be poor in the only true riches. It teaches us, that though men heap up silver as stones, and gold as the dust of the streets—though they add house to house, and field to field—yet, when they die, they may be left without a rag to cover their nakedness, and their souls may appear before God without anything wherewith to redeem them from shame, and poverty, and everlasting contempt. It reminds us of the rich man, who said, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;* and yet God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* Above all, it reminds us of that solemn query propounded by our Saviour, *What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Mark viii. 36; for alas! it too often happens, that they who *are rich in this world,* are *not rich* towards God. *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,* Luke xviii. 24, 25. Therefore, I *charge all such,* in the name of the most high God, with all plainness and sincerity, that you attend to the exhortation of the apostle.

The charge of the apostle consists of two parts. He first tells you what you must avoid; and then instructs you what you must do.

I. There are two things which you must avoid.

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1. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded.* Riches are apt to puff the owner up. Great respect is paid by all classes to the rich. In most cases it is wealth that makes the man, for gold is the aristocracy of the world. Crowds follow him that possesses it; he has many dependants; he is looked up to; he is quoted as an oracle; he is served with eagerness; and in proportion to his wealth he finds his greatness to increase. Now in all cases poor human nature is prone to pride and self-conceit. How much more easy is it for one to be high-minded, when all around conspire to make him so; and how natural is it for one perched upon his shining pinnacle, to look with contempt upon those who walk humbly in the plain, or grovel in the dust beneath him! But beware of such conduct. Let no proud, vain-glorious thoughts fill your hearts. Do not despise those less wealthy, or less exalted than yourselves. *Be not high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate*, Rom. xii. 16. There are two considerations, which are of excellent use to beat down the pride that wealth is so apt to engender. 1. Consider that God abhors the proud. No sin, save the sin of unbelief, is so hateful in the eyes of a pure and holy God, as the sin of pride. The first of the seven sins which God abhors—and which is an abomination to him—is a proud look, Prov. vi. 17. How must it provoke the Most High, before whom all our ranks and titles of honor are but so many "degrees of littleness," to see his own gifts made, or rather perverted, into an occasion, whereby an insignificant creature may for a few years plume himself, and become vain in his fancied greatness! 2. Consider, that even if it were lawful for man to be high-minded, yet the possession of wealth, the being rich in this world, is no sufficient reason for pride. What is wealth but a perishing treasure—often unjustly acquired—often improperly employed, and even when lawfully acquired and rightly used, a fading and transitory source of influence and enjoyment? Do not all go to one place at the last? Shall not all stand before God, and be judged, not according to their silver and their gold, but according to the deeds they have done? And shall any man, on account of a possession that he cannot take with him out of this world, say to his poorer neighbor, "Stand by thyself, come not nigh unto me. Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool, for I am better than thou?" I charge you, that ye *be not high-minded.*

2. The apostle also warns you against *trusting in uncertain riches.* This is a common and lamentable error. How apt are men

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to make gold their trust, and to feel their hopes of happiness increase in proportion to the increase of their wealth. It is hard to trust in God alone, but easy to trust in riches. Such is the blindness of the natural heart, that we utterly lose sight of the Giver of every good thing, and put our confidence in his gifts. No sin is more common, even in nominally Christian lands. We are not surprised to find that every Chinese merchant has an image of the god of riches in his house, to which he pays his daily devotions; but it should surprise us, to find how often the throne of the same idol is set up in the Christian's heart. You may not burn incense before him, nor bend your body in adoration, but there be many in Christian communities that serve him with as true a devotion, and as hearty a worship, as the veriest Pagan that ever lived. Is this an uncharitable supposition? What means, then, this craving after riches—this pleasure in seeing wealth increase—this constant application of every power of body and mind to the one object of making money—this giving up of the whole heart to the allurements of the world, and of the money that purchases the world, which we see on every side? For this purpose is country forsaken, and friends deserted, and dangers and perils endured. For this purpose are too many of the rights of the weak neglected, or trampled on. For this purpose is God forgotten, and the Sabbath dishonored. What greater sacrifices do the heathen make to their idols, than many nominal Christians are constantly making in pursuit of wealth?

And yet, when wealth is obtained, what great benefit do you thence derive? Are you sure that you shall continue to possess it? Do not dangers crowd thick on every hand, threatening to deprive you of all you have acquired, with so much toil? Sometimes you have adventured your all in a single ship, and you know not but the winds may destroy, the waves engulf, the fire consume, or the pirates seize it. You become security for a friend, and he fails, and involves you in his ruin. You embark your capital in a scheme that requires all your time and strength, and when you have gone too far to withdraw, your health fails, and your hopes vanish. But why enumerate all the casualties that may interfere with your success? *Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven*, Prov. xxiii. 5. Well did the apostle say, *Trust not in uncertain riches*, or as it is more accurately and expressively translated in the margin, *Trust not in the*

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uncertainty of riches. Nothing is so proverbially uncertain as the possession of wealth. A thousand chances may deprive you of it all, even during life; and certainly at death you shall lose it, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Therefore, use the wealth you now possess, and enjoy the good things God has given you, but do not make them your trust. If riches increase, set not your heart upon them, for they will certainly disappoint your expectations. *Behold, I show you a more excellent way,* 1 Cor. xii. 31.

II. The apostle forbids your trusting to riches, but he does not therefore remove from you every object on which you may rely. Man must have something to depend upon. There are those who love to talk of the independence of man, and to boast of his greatness and authority. To a thinking mind, all such boasting is folly. In all the wide world, there is not a more dependent and helpless being than man. Although lord of this lower creation, the ivy is not more dependent on the oak, than man is dependent on those around him. In infancy his every want must be supplied by others; and as he grows up, he is still the same dependent being, and will lean on something, though it be but a bruised reed, for support. Some trust in horses, some trust in chariots, some trust in friends, but most men trust in wealth. The apostle utterly forbids our reposing our hopes on this, and shows us a better ground of confidence. *Trust not in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.* Make him your stay, and ground of hope. Put your confidence in him, and in all times of danger or want flee to him for shelter. Labor to possess your minds with a sense of his greatness, power, and present care for you. Obtain practical views of his providence, that overrules, and controls, and directs all things. Believe that nothing can happen to you, or others, without his special permission. Commit your interests and prospects into his hands, assured that he is both able and willing to care for you. Let no anxious or distressing cares, and schemes for the future, occupy your minds. *I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? And why*

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take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the fields, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, oh ye of little faith? But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, Matt. vi. 25–33. Trust therefore in the living God, and you will find him a ground of confidence; not like the uncertain quicksands of this world's treasures, but stable and sure, as the everlasting rocks, and by such confidence you will be liberally rewarded. If you trust in riches, what do you obtain? Constant cares and anxieties, toils and unending labors, and fruit that cloys while you use it. But to those who trust in God, he giveth richly all things to enjoy. All things come of him. Even the rich have their wealth by the dispensations of his providence, but without his blessing there is no solid enjoyment. Trust not therefore in the gifts, but in the giver.

Trust in the living God. This is the first and the most indispensable requisite in all acceptable service. *Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* Heb. xi. 6. But it is not faith alone that is required; and if it be true faith, it will not be alone. *Faith without works is dead,* it is not faith. Wherever faith truly exists, it shows itself by its fruits. It works by love and purifies the heart. Accordingly, in our text, the apostle, after charging the rich not to trust in riches, but in God, proceeds to enjoin on them the performance of such good works as may evidence the sincerity and depth of their trust. *Do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.* The apostle's meaning is this. All those who possess this world's riches, are merely the stewards of God. All that you possess comes from him. It is not given to you in perpetuity, but is lent to you to be employed in his service. You are allowed to enjoy it yourselves, but at the same time remember, that when he cometh he will require his own with interest, Luke xix. 23. Freely therefore, as you have received, so freely give. There are abundance of objects to call for your charity. There are many bodily wants of the poor to be supplied; for the word spoken in ancient times to the Jews, is true in our days, *the poor shall never cease out of the land,* Deut. xv. 11, and all such have a claim on

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your benevolence. There are too many who say, in the words of him who slew his brother, "Am I my brother's keeper? What have I to do with the wants of the poor?" But such a plea will not avail before God. To a certain extent you are your brother's keeper. We are all members of God's great family, and though to some he has given more than others, his intention is not that the latter should suffer want, but that the former should supply their wants. I know not how this can be more clearly expressed than it is by the apostle—*I mean not that other men be eased, and ye be burdened; but by an equality, that your abundance may be a supply for their wants, that their abundance also may be a supply for your wants, that there may be an equality: as it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack*, 2 Cor. viii. 13–15. And to encourage you, in a liberal distribution to the wants of the poor, remember the words of unfailing truth, *He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord: and that which he hath given will he pay him again*, Prov. xix. 17. And also that promise, *The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered himself*, Prov. xi. 25.

But it is not the bodily wants alone of our neighbors that should be relieved by us. There are multitudes on all sides who are not only poor in this world, but poor as it respects the next. How truly may it be said of every heathen country, that there is *a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord*, Amos viii. 11. I speak specially of the inhabitants of this great empire, and I ask you what is the prospect of their salvation? In the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles, *Whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?* Rom. xi. 14. There is much misapprehension on this point, and some diversity of views even among divines as to the future condition of the heathen who have never heard of Christ; for some maintain that those who have never heard of Christ, may be saved, provided they live perfectly moral lives. There can be no hesitation in admitting the truth of this proposition. If the heathen, or any of them, live perfectly moral lives, and fully obey the light of nature, they shall be saved, even without the knowledge of Christ. But are there any such? On this point I feel constrained to say there are none such in the world. From

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the day when Adam sinned, down to the present time, there never was a person who lived a perfectly moral life. Who has ever seen such a person? What is his name? Where did he dwell? I repeat it again. There has never lived a single heathen, whose own conscience did not convict him of sin—who did not acknowledge that he did what he knew to be wrong. The world may be safely challenged to produce one solitary example: and when such an example is produced, then it may be said, "Saved without Christ." The testimony of the Scriptures is explicit. *There is none righteous, no not one, there is none that doeth good, no not one*, Rom. iii. 10–12. With experience and Scripture thus uniting their voices, we may without hesitation assert, that none who have arrived at years of maturity can be saved, unless they have heard of Christ, and believed on him. Hear the declaration of Peter and John, *There is salvation in no other; for there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. I beg that what I say may not be misapprehended. While I believe that the heathen who do not believe on Christ are lost, I do not mean that they are condemned for not believing on Christ. They have never heard of Christ, and cannot be condemned for not believing on him; but they are condemned, and that because they do not act according to the light of nature, which they already possess. Their own hearts condemn them; and God who is greater than their hearts, also condemns them. They have sinned without the written law of God, and they perish without the written law, Rom. ii. 12; for they are judged according to their works. Neither do I believe that the punishment of the heathen who die without the knowledge of Christ will be as severe as the punishment of those who have heard of him, and refused to believe. *That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes*, Luke xii. 47, 48. Oh, my hearers, I warn you, as in the presence of God, that if you sink to perdition from under the sound of the gospel, your punishment will be inconceivably more dreadful than that of the heathen who have not heard these good tidings. *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee*, Matt. xi. 24.

Is such the condition of the heathen? Then is it not the part of charity—is it not the duty of those who possess the means, to

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use every endeavor, and teach them how they may be saved? If you cannot go yourselves and teach them how to believe, should you not send those who can? and support them while they give their time, and talents, and strength to this great work? In reference to this also the apostle spoke, when he said, *Do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35; *Brethren, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich*, 2 Cor. viii. 9.

Finally, by taking this course enjoined by the apostle, by ceasing to trust in riches, and trusting in the living God, and by showing the sincerity of your belief by your actions, you secure for yourselves a solid and permanent happiness. *Thus you shall lay up in store for yourselves a good foundation for the time to come, and shall lay hold on eternal life.* If your riches continue in your possession you shall enjoy them the more, because your own consciences will approve of the use you make of them. If by any dispensation of God's providence you are deprived of them, you shall witness their flight with little regret, for your ground of confidence, the living God, will still be the same; and in either case, in all time of your prosperity and wealth, and in all time of your adversity and poverty, you shall look to the city built on sure foundations, where your treasures are safely guarded. *There no moth nor rust corrupts, and thieves do not break through nor steal*, Matt. vi. 20.

Macao, July 21, 1844.

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SERMON XXVIII.

BELIEVING PRAYER.

All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.—MATTHEW xxi. 22.

THIS is a very remarkable promise. Yet it is one often misunderstood, and is therefore worthy of a careful examination. It was spoken by our Saviour when he caused the fig-tree to wither which had *nothing thereon but leaves only. The disciples marvelled when they saw it, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away*, and our Saviour embraced the opportunity to impress on their minds a sense of the power of faith in God, and the benefits of faith in prayer. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also, ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

There may be a special reference here to the miraculous gifts, which, in the early history of the church, were given to the apostles and their followers for the establishing of the gospel in the earth. But the same promise is elsewhere made, where there is no special reference to miraculous gifts, and it is given there in even more explicit terms than those used in the text. For our Lord says, *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened*, Matt. vii. 7, 8. And so the apostle John tells us, *We have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him*, 1 John iii. 22. How full and explicit are these promises! It seems as if our gracious Creator had spread before us all his riches, telling us to put forth our hand, and take what we needed. Yet it is too manifest that notwithstanding these promises, much prayer is offered, which meets no favorable answer from God.

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How is this to be explained? God is not a man that he should lie. His promise is on record, and if it is not fulfilled, there must be some sufficient reason why it is not. The apostle James gives one reason, *Ye ask, and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*, James iv. 3. But this reason, though a most sufficient cause why God should refuse to answer such prayers, does not exist in all cases. For many persons pray, who have no such unworthy motives in asking, and yet they receive not. Humble and sincere, but desponding Christians, and young converts, are often perplexed and troubled at this, and are almost tempted to ask, Is there not some secret reservation on the part of God? Is there not some unknown condition attached to this promise, which prevents my receiving the answer? But, no, there is no secret reservation—there is no unknown condition on the part of God. The promise is as plain as words can make it, *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* There is a condition expressed in this promise, which is often misapprehended, or overlooked. Give me your attention whilst I attempt to set it clearly before you.

In order to obtain answers to our prayers, *one condition* is required, and only one; but that one is always required. It is that we pray in faith. *All things—believing.* This condition is expressed in this promise; but it is implied in every promise, whether it be expressed or not. The very nature of prayer demands that it be in faith, otherwise it cannot be answered. Unbelieving prayer cannot be acceptable to God; for it is laid down as a positive law of his kingdom, *Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh unto God must believe*, Heb. xi. 6.

Hence it is very plain why prayer is often not heard. Ask yourselves, what was the character of those prayers you offered, and to which you received no answer. Did you pray in faith, in the name of Christ, and with full persuasion of God's ability and willingness to answer? Oh there is much meaning in our Saviour's inquiry, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8; for even true believers oftentimes pray without faith. But here is the difficulty, and it is also the main point in our text, *What is believing prayer?* How shall we know if we have offered it? for it seems that all hinges on this, and unless we offer it, it is useless to pray. *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Or as it is, even more explicitly, in the parallel passage in Mark, *What things so-*

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ever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them, Mark xi. 24.

In answer to this inquiry, as to what constitutes prayer in faith, I may remark, that it does not consist in several things that are often thought to belong to it. 1. It does not consist in believing that you shall receive the identical things you ask for. Many suppose it does, and are greatly distressed because they cannot firmly believe that they shall receive the very things they mention in prayer. But this is to mistake the object of faith. Faith is founded on the word of God, and not on our own fancies, wishes, or expectations; and without the word of God, there is no warrant for such special faith as this. Unless you have a special promise from God, that you shall have the very things you name, you cannot believe that you shall receive them. You may earnestly desire a thing, and may pray for it in faith, and may receive it too, without any such assured conviction beforehand that it shall be granted. The case of Hezekiah when he was sick, is precisely in point. The prophet came to tell him he must die. Hezekiah earnestly desired to live, and prayed earnestly to God for life, and wept sore in his supplications. That prayer was offered in faith, for God heard it; and yet, obviously, it was not possible for Hezekiah to believe that he should certainly have his petitions. How could he believe that he should live, when the word of God was, *Thou shalt die and not live!* But when his prayer was offered in faith, and heard, and the promise was given him that he should live, then he believed he should have the very thing he requested. And so it is ordinarily. We may offer the prayer of faith, without being fully persuaded that the precise object of our prayer shall be granted. 2. Nor are you to believe that you shall have the things you ask in the very way, and manner, or at the very time you expect. You can believe nothing except what is revealed, and where have you any revelation that you shall have what you ask, just when and how you choose? The apostle Paul was very desirous to visit Rome, and often prayed that he might do so. His prayer was answered, but neither in the time nor in the way that he expected. Instead of going there speedily and of his own accord, he was led there a prisoner, after many delays, and multiplied perils. And how often is this true in Christian experience. The young convert is anxious to grow in grace, and become holy, and offers earnest prayer to God to effect this. Those prayers are heard and answered,

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but not often in the way he expects. There are few who might not adopt the words of the pious John Newton :

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace :
'Twas he who taught me thus to pray.
And he I trust has answered prayer :
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair."

Neither Scripture nor experience, therefore, justify or require the Christian to believe that he shall always obtain precisely what he asks; or if he obtains it, that it shall be in the way, and at the time he expects. Now the characters of believing prayer are these:—

1. There must be a just sense of our own condition and wants. This is one of the hardest of all things, for our ignorance of what is really good for us, and necessary, is notorious. We are like sick men, who are constantly craving after that which would injure them, and in too many of our prayers we ask God to give us what would be ruinous to our best interests. One man asks for wealth, which would only make him proud, and forgetful of God. Another asks for health, when, perhaps, there is nothing he needs so much as a painful course of disciplinary sickness. One man asks for joy, when it may be better for himself in the end, and most for the glory of God, that he be exercised in the depths of sorrow. Another asks for the life of his sick child, and will take no denial, not foreseeing that if his request were granted, he might mourn bitterly in the latter end, over the crimes and the follies which an early death would have prevented. How truly it was said by the apostle Paul, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought*, Rom. viii. 26. And how candidly does he confess, that he himself prayed for the removal of *a thorn in the flesh*, which the Lord saw to be needful for him, 2 Cor. xii. 8. Most necessary is it, therefore, that we should know what we want; and if we are ignorant, then there is a precious promise, that the Spirit shall help our infirmities, and teach us to make intercession according to the will of God, Rom. viii. 26, 27. Let each one therefore carefully study his own wants, that he may know what it is he needs, and pray accordingly.

2. In the next place, there must be an earnest desire to obtain what we ask. It must be not merely a wish, but an appetite, a

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hungering and thirsting after it; and this will lead to earnest prayer that we may obtain it. Just as a child when hungry comes to its father for bread, and asks, expecting to receive what is needful, so must we. This is the very comparison our Saviour uses. *What man is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* Matt. vii. 9–11. What reply would you make to the request of your child, if he came and asked for a thing without desiring it? Would not every wise parent defer granting his request, till he really needed and wished what he asked? It is only *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man that availeth much*, James v. 16; and all who come to God without desires, shall be sent away without reply.

3. But chiefly, the prayer of faith implies a due sense of the character of God, and such a belief, trust, and confidence, as shall honor him. Without a just knowledge of his character, you cannot come to him with the feelings which believing prayer implies. Those points of his character which you must chiefly know are these:—

(1.) That he is everywhere present, and knows all things, that he is near you, and hears your prayers. Need I prove that this is true? Is it not expressly declared, that *the eye of the Lord is in every place, beholding the evil and the good*, Prov. xv. 3. And is he not called the Hearer of prayer? *Oh thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come*, Ps. lxv. 2.

(2.) That he is Almighty, and however great the things you ask, his power is greater still. It is in vain to come to God, unless you believe that he is able to grant your request. Often when the blind and the needy came to Christ, he asked, *Believe ye that I am able to do this? and according to their faith it was done unto them*, Matt. ix. 29. But in other places he did no mighty works because of their unbelief, Matt. xiii. 58.

(3.) That he is supremely good, and is both willing and ready to bestow every needed blessing on those who ask. To attempt to prove that God is ready and willing to bestow good on his creatures, is like proving that the sun gives light and heat. *In him we live and move and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights*, James i. 17. It was such a conviction as this that

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filled the Leper's heart, when he came to Christ, and *worshipping him, said, Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean*, Matt. viii. 2. How acceptable his faith was to Christ, we may readily see in the answer of our Lord, *Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed*, Matt. viii. 2, 3. Faith thus looks upon God, as a Father, ever near, all-powerful and kind; and it applies to him with confidence in him and affection for him. It lays hold on his promises, and pleads them as a ground of hope.

4. There is but one other requisite to believing prayer, that needs now to be mentioned, and that is—*It must be in the name of Christ.* The heart in which faith exists, has also been convinced of sin. The believer is profoundly sensible of his own unworthiness and ill-deserts. He does not dare to come in his own name, nor to rely on his own merits for acceptance with God. He looks around for some one to be his security, whose merits are sufficient to cover all his sins, and to purchase all the blessings he needs. Such a one he finds in Christ, and accordingly, putting his trust in him, he offers his prayers in his name. This is done in obedience to our Lord's command, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*, John xvi. 23, 24.

Such are the requisites in the heart that would offer prayer. And to pray with faith and acceptance, it is only necessary to call these feelings into exercise. Knowing thus the character of God, you will come to him with confidence in his ability and willingness to hear you, and with affection, and love, and reverence. Knowing your own wants and necessities, you will come with earnest desires to have them supplied, and will not readily go away without securing what you want; and knowing your own unworthiness, and Christ's all-sufficiency, you cannot but choose to ask in his name, while in proportion to the largeness of your views of his merits, will be the strength of your own confidence of success. *Such is believing prayer.* Come then with these feelings to the throne of grace. Yea, come boldly, *that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*, Heb. iv. 16. Come with the fullest confidence in God, for in Christ *we have access with confidence by the faith of him*, Eph. ii. 12. You come to a God of boundless might and love—to a Being whose heart expands with benevolence to all his creatures—to a fountain that

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is ever sending forth the streams of joy. Stint not therefore your asking. As the Lord said to Ahaz, by the prophet, so might it be said to you, *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above*, Is. vii. 11, and it shall be granted, for says our Saviour, *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.* All things! Then how large is the field before you, and how varied are the objects for which you may pray with the certainty of a favorable answer!

But here, the believer is met by a question which has greatly embarrassed many—What is meant by the *all things* which he may ask? Are we to understand absolutely all things? Is there no exception? It requires but a very little reflection to be assured that the words of our Saviour cannot mean literally all things. Some things in their own nature are bad, and would ruin both body and soul. It is not to be supposed therefore that the Christian should ask for these; nor if he would ask for them, that God would bestow them on him. If he should by some mischance ask for them, our gracious Creator would not grant them. What father would give his child a poisonous reptile for a plaything, even though the child were to beg with tears for so dangerous a gift? Many things too, which are not wrong, would be injurious to certain persons. For such things they should not ask, nor if they should ask, could God be expected to bestow them. Strong meat is not for children, but for grown men, and the sick man would not be nourished by the food that is required by those in health. But surely none would rebuke the father, or the physician, who would refuse the request that the child in his childishness, or the patient in his thoughtlessness, or ignorance made. When therefore our Saviour says *All things—ye shall receive*, the very nature of the case supposes there is some exception or limitation. And it is a question of no little interest what is that limitation? The truth may perhaps be most clearly expressed by saying that "All things whatsoever we shall ask in prayer, believing, shall be granted, so far as the granting of them is consistent with God's glory, and our own good," Rom. viii. 28. Or the same truth may be expressed in other words, even the words of the beloved disciple, *If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us*, 1 John v. 14.

At first sight, this seems like a larger exception; but consider a moment, and it is no exception or limitation at all. There is no man living who would ask for what he knew was not

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good for him, and surely there is no Christian who could ask for that which should dishonor God. Fancy a child of God deliberately requesting his Creator to give him what was useless to himself, or not for the glory of God! But I will not shock you with such a supposition. The thing is impossible. It is therefore no exception to say, that the Christian may pray for all things, except what is not for his own good, or for the glory of God. There is no exception, when Christ says, *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive*, for the Christian will not knowingly ask for things which he ought not to receive; and if by mistake he should ask for such things, his own heart would say, as soon as informed of his mistake—"Oh do not grant that petition." But if in the believing spirit already described, you pray for things you need, and which it shall be for God's glory to grant, you shall certainly obtain your request. You shall have all things you need, and more you cannot ask. You shall obtain the very things you want, or else shall be enriched with gifts which you yourself would prefer, to what you may have asked for. The question then will readily arise, How shall we know whether what we pray for, is for God's glory and our own good? Or how shall our prayer be acceptable, if through ignorance we mistake, and ask for what we should not? The question is not difficult to answer. For,

1. There are many things which we are certain it is right to ask for. We are commanded to pray for those very things, and are assured that prayer for them shall be answered. And what are those things? They are the very things most indispensable to our comfort and eternal salvation. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, but this we cannot do without help from on high. That help comes to us from the Holy Spirit, whose influences are as needful for our spiritual life, as the atmospheric air is for that of the body. Now in all the Scriptures there is nothing so explicitly promised to believers, as the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is but to ask, and receive—but to open the mouth, and to breathe. We can never err in asking for all things connected with our salvation. The pardon of our sins —the sanctification of our natures—deliverance from the power of Satan—increase of Christian graces—extended means of usefulness—and the promotion of God's kingdom, and glory on earth, are legitimate objects of prayer, in which *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much*, James v. 16.

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2. It is also in all ordinary cases, right and proper, to pray for such temporal mercies, as are needful for our health and comfort. It might be dangerous to pray for riches, we are not required to pray for poverty, but we may adopt the prayer of Agar, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8. This we are taught by our blessed Lord himself, when he instructed us to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread.*

3. A diligent examination of our own case and of God's providential dealings with us, and a careful study of the word of God, will often show us that there are many things concerning which we may pray, with almost the certainty of having our prayers heard. But there are many subjects where we do not seem to have such clear intimations that we shall receive a favorable answer, and yet they press upon the Christian's mind, and he feels that it would be a relief to spread them before God, and ask his blessing in reference to them. Is it right to do so? Can he offer the prayer of faith when he has no special promise, and if so, how? I answer, most undoubtedly he can, and it would be wrong not to do it, and this class includes literally everything that concerns us, our pursuits, our interests or our friends. It matters not how unimportant the affair may seem, if it presses on your mind, it is your privilege and duty to lay it before your God, and ask for his guidance and direction. In your private prayers to him you cannot be too particular. You cannot tell him too familiarly all you suffer, and all you want. Whether the subject of interest to you be your worldly pursuits—your health—your plans for the future—your present difficulties or joys—your friends—your children—your country, whatever it be, it is a legitimate subject of prayer to God. For says the apostle, *In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,* Phil. iv. 6. With such a warrant, how can you hesitate to go to him with every want? Do not fear that you will weary him,—or that in the multiplicity of petitions thus presented, he will overlook your case. His ear is ever open, and he will more delight to hear all your requests, than the fondest mother to listen to the innocent prattling of her child. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee!* Is. xlix. 15.

But observe, that all this, while you may and should ask with earnest desires, must be with entire submission to God's

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will. If it be for his glory to grant what you ask, then you shall have it; but you should also say, "If not for thy glory, grant not my request." Cast your eyes back to the silent and sorrowful garden of Gethsemane. Behold there your Saviour, on his face, in his deadly agony—listen to his strong crying, and mark his tears, while he prays that, if possible, the bitter cup might pass from him—but hear also those words, so soft, yet so distinct, *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done*—and go thou and do likewise. Then shall your prayer be heard and answered, if not in the way you desired, yet in that way which Infinite Wisdom sees best for you. The duty of prayer is one generally acknowledged, but I fear sadly neglected. It is in itself so proper that dependent creatures should thus call upon their Creator—it is so expressly commanded in his word—it is in itself so useful, and so delightful an exercise—that there can be no question as to its duty and desirableness. Yet, alas! how many there are that do not pray! Crowds flock to the levees of kings, but few to the footstool of the Almighty. Men count it an honor to be intimate with their fellow-worms, who happen to stand a little higher than others, but turn away in undisguised coldness from the opportunities of intimate intercourse with the King of kings. How many of you, my hearers, are in the habit of daily secret prayer? How often do you shut your closet door, and pray to your Father which seeth in secret? And of those among you who do pray, what is the character of your prayers? Do you come with reverence, and yet with affection—with humble confidence, as to a gracious Father—and pour into his bosom the full tide of pent-up feelings, and gushing emotions, that elsewhere find no rest? Is your heart filled with peace, and do you retire from his presence more humble, more watchful, more resolved to be entirely his? If so, it is well. Believing prayer produces such effects as these.

But if you come into his presence with carelessness—if you worship him without seriousness or affection—if you find wandering thoughts habitually eating out the life of your devotion—if you retire from your knees, unhumbled, unfeeling, and mingle again in the world, as though you had not been conversing with God—then be assured it is not well with you. You have not prayed aright, and shall not receive.

Macao, August 19, 1844.

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SERMON XXIX.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.—Eph. ii. 8.

It seemed a dark dispensation of Providence which shut the apostle Paul in prison, and bound him with a chain in Rome. Such an event had been greatly feared by the disciples, in the several cities through which he passed, on his last journey to Jerusalem; and they had united their tears and entreaties to turn him aside from his purpose, and spare a little longer to the churches the piety and the eloquence that had already brought so many into the church. But the apostle was inflexible. He went *bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, where he was ready, not to be bound only, but also to die for the Lord Jesus*, Acts xxi. 13. You know his history. He was seized in Jerusalem, bound, and beaten, and delivered to the Roman power, and to escape the malice and cunning of his own countrymen, obliged to appeal unto Cæsar. After long imprisonment and delay, he left the shores of Palestine for the Imperial City, followed by the prayers and the tears of the sorrowing disciples. They watched his departure with sad forebodings, for to their apprehensions it must have seemed certain that the eloquent voice which had not feared, even before Felix, *to reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, would now be silenced, and the energetic hand which had been stretched out before Agrippa, while he answered for himself, would now be fettered and useless. But behold how rich is the goodness and the wisdom of God. His voice was not silenced, but for two full years he preached in his own hired house in Rome, to all who came unto him, no man forbidding him, Acts xxviii. 30, 31. His hand was not fettered, but he wrote and sent forth his Epistles, to warn, and comfort, and instruct the churches

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he had left. His soul was not bound, but he was there favored with enlargement of spirit, and astonishing revelations of the grace of God. From his prison-house have gone forth some of the richest treasures of the church, for the Epistles written during his imprisonment, breathe the aspirations of a soul almost in heaven. The Epistle to the Ephesians is especially remarkable. None of all his writings are more rich in gospel truth than this. None compress so much thought in so few words. None speak in more glowing terms of the exceeding grace of Christ. He dwells on the fulness and freeness of that grace, and heaps expression on expression, as though laboring to describe its greatness.

By *the grace of God*, we are to understand that gracious feeling of benignity, or love, which God exercises towards any of our race in saving them from their sins. Its very name implies that it is free on God's part, being exercised to those utterly unworthy of it. It is undeserved, unbought favor, and in the New Testament is constantly contrasted with works. For, says the apostle, *If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace*, Rom. xi. 6. *For, to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt*, Rom. iv. 4.

The most cursory examination of those passages of Scripture, which speak of the grace of God in man's salvation, shows that the inspired writers deemed its greatness unspeakable. As in describing the sufferings of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, the evangelists ransacked all the copiousness of the Greek language for terms of sorrow, so in describing the greatness of that grace, which is at once *the cause* and *the effect* of that suffering, the apostle seems equally intent to use the most forcible expressions. Not content with calling upon the Ephesians to admire *the riches of the grace of God*, Eph. i. 7, he shows them also *the exceeding riches of his grace*, ii. 7, and glories in his apostleship, which enabled him to preach among the Gentiles, *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, iii. 8; and elsewhere he speaks in the deepest humility, of the grace of the Lord Jesus which was *exceeding abundant towards himself*, 1 Tim. i. 14. Our text, which speaks of this grace of God, is naturally divided into three propositions:—

I. Salvation is entirely of grace—*By grace ye are saved.*

II. The instrument by which we obtain salvation is faith—*Through faith.*

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III. Even faith is a gracious gift of God—*And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*

I. That our salvation is entirely of grace is seen in several particulars:—

1. The author of our salvation is the infinite God. Before any of his creatures were made, he existed alone, perfectly independent, perfectly blessed, and needing none to add to his happiness. He saw fit to create the universe, and to beautify it with innumerable gifts. His works partake of the greatness of his own character, and it is he who *gives us life, and breath, and all things*, Acts xvii. 25. But can it be deemed possible that this great and glorious Being should ever be under obligations to any of his creatures? Can we conceive for a moment, that any of those who owe their whole existence to his free goodness, can by any services merit his favor, and of right demand more than he chooses to give? Let no such idea enter any man's mind. Let the Hindoo dream, by his bodily austerities, and self-imposed penances, and acts of merit, to make Brahma or Siva his debtor, but let not the Christian who is taught, when he has done all, to say, *we are unprofitable servants, we have done only what it was our duty to do*, Luke xvii. 10, harbor any such vain fancy. Hear the words of Eliphaz and Elihu to Job, *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?* Job xxii. 3. *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man*, Job xxxv. 7, 8, but they cannot add to, or take from the wealth of your Creator.

Even were our race all sinless beings, they could have no claim upon Jehovah. All things come of him, and it would still be of his own that they served him, 1 Chron. xxix. 14. The idea that any of his creatures can make the eternal and supreme Jehovah a debtor to himself, is preposterous. The sinless angels who stand around his throne, and await his commands, ask for no rewards and claim no merits. His service is their life, and though he bestows upon them unnumbered benefits, this is only of his own free and abounding goodness. The salvation, therefore, of any of our race, must of necessity be a free gift on the part of God.

And this is still more evident, when you consider who they are who receive it, for it is not to sinless beings that this grace is

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offered. Although even a sinless person cannot demand life of God, as his right, yet there is nothing in the character of such a person to prevent God from bestowing such a gift. But we to whom this salvation is preached, are full of sin, very far removed from God as creatures, our distance is yet infinitely greater as sinners; for as the apostle shows in the chapter from which our text is taken, those who receive salvation are *dead in trespasses and in sins;* far from being obedient servants of God, they walk, *according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* Far from being holy, and pure in life, they *have their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind,* and to sum up all in one word, are *by nature the children of wrath even as others,* Eph. ii. 1–3. Now it is too obvious to require proof, that if the great and independent God who cannot be under obligations to any of his creatures, is pleased to take any of our sinful race, and make them heirs of salvation, it must be by grace alone.

2. That this salvation is entirely of grace appears still more clearly in the choice of the persons who receive it. For it is not all the human race, who are made partakers. There is melancholy meaning in the words of our compassionate Lord—*Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,* Matt. vi. 14. And who are they that find that narrow gate? Who are they that receive that word, and embrace the proffered salvation? Are they the rich, or the wise, or the amiable, or the distinguished among men? Sometimes they are, but often they are not—Nay, commonly they are not, for to the poor the gospel is preached, and *not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called,* 1 Cor. i. 26. God does not choose the heirs of his inheritance as man would choose. It is not for us to ask why one is taken rather than another, but we know that while he who trusts to his own goodness is left, the abandoned sinner is sometimes taken. *Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,* is all that we can say, when God sees fit to reveal unto babes, what he conceals from the wise and prudent, Matt. xi. 26. A choice there must be, if all do not receive it; but the reasons of that choice are not made known to us. The doctrine of God's eternal election, is one much cavilled at among men; but it is well for us there is an election, for otherwise, none would or could be saved. The whole race would go down to destruction

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forever, were there not an *election of grace.* It is God himself who says, *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy,* Exod. xxxiii. 19. The apostle quotes this declaration, and then draws the obvious conclusion—*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,* Rom. xi. 15, 16; and he must be bold indeed, who dares to arraign him for so doing. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? and shall the poor blind creatures of a day, who scarcely know their own minds, censure Him who knows all things, and doeth all things according to his own pleasure? If there be anything that shows the purely gratuitous nature of our salvation, it is the doctrine of election; for the very idea of a choice to eternal life, before the person chosen has done either good or evil, makes it manifest, that it is grace, and not merit which secures it. Thus, the purpose of God according to election, stands *not of works, but of him that calleth,* Rom. ix. 11. "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto eternal life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ to everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto: and all to the praise of his glorious grace."—Con. of Faith, iii. The heart of every real child of God acknowledges this. I appeal to your own experience, fellow-Christian, and follower of Christ. What was there in you to attach the love of God, when he called you to himself? What could he see in you, to make him choose you in preference to others around, not so distinguished? You were not seeking him when he called you—you were running away from him—you were forgetting him—you were chasing this world's pleasures as a child chases butterflies—you were saying by your actions, if not by your words, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." As Christ said to the apostles, so he says to all his disciples, *Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you,* John xv. 16. And ever since you have professed to be his, what is there in you to attract his love? Why doth he still bear with your backslidings—your lukewarmness—your unkindness? I appeal to the honest convictions of your own hearts, and to the repeated confessions of your own prayers, that all this is not because you

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have deserved it, but because of his free grace. *God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace are ye saved*, Eph. ii. 4, 5.

It is not my present purpose to enter on a full discussion of the doctrine of election, but there is one remark that should not be forgotten. The humble, and especially the desponding believer is oftentimes troubled for want of clear evidence of his safety, and is distressed because he cannot believe he is elected to life. That you are one of God's elect (if you really be such), is a truth that you are not required to believe on the evidence of *faith*, but on that of *experience. You are not required to believe that you are elected.* You are not required to believe anything that is not revealed, and you have no revelation of God's secret purposes towards you. These sacred things belong only unto God; those that are revealed, and those alone, belong to us, Deut. xxix. 29. The exhortation of the apostle is not to believe that you are elected, but it is rather, *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. That is, make sure your interest in Christ —obey his revealed will—keep his commandments—show by your life, that you are his—and when thus you feel his love glowing in your hearts, then shall you know by experience your election of God. Thus only can you know it. Many might thus learn it, but their own negligence prevents them; and there are but few who acquire in this life a clear conviction of it, even as there are but few that obtain full assurance of their salvation, ere they enter heaven.

3. But the grace of God is chiefly displayed in the way in which salvation was purchased for us. It was not enough that God in his infinite goodness and love had purposes of mercy to any of our race. It was not enough that in his sovereign election he had chosen some to be the recipients of his grace; those whom he had chosen were like all others, sinful, guilty, and condemned. *They were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*, Eph. ii. 3. *They were sometimes alienated, and enemies in mind by wicked works*, Col. i. 23. The stains of sin were in their souls. The claims of justice were still unsatisfied, and the wrath of God was still hanging over them. God had indeed his purposes of mercy and grace toward them, but mercy and grace cannot be exercised at the expense of justice, and therefore the mercy that chose them to be heirs of salvation, must provide also a way to satisfy justice

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and the means to sanctify their souls. Who then shall pay their mighty debt? Who is able to loose the band that binds them, and set these prisoners free? The angels who stood round the throne of God were dumb, when this question was proposed to them; but there was one there, greater than them all, who hastened to reply. It was the Lord Jesus Christ. *Then said I, Lo I come! in the volume of the book it is written of me*, Ps. xl. 7. Here is the exceeding riches of the grace of Christ. He who is God's fellow, and thinks it no robbery to be equal with God, undertakes to bear the penalty, and pay the dreadful ransom. It was no hasty motion that prompted this proposal. From all eternity he foresaw every painful step he must take—the humiliation of his life on earth—the pain, the shame, the spitting, and the cross. He saw them all, and chose them all, and that even with delight that so he might redeem man, Prov. viii. 30. Age after age rolled away, and his mighty plan was gradually unfolded, that man might mark its every line. Prophets, and priests, and kings, sacrifices, and ceremonies, and types, and sacred ordinances, all united and pointed onward to the cross. Still age after age rolled away, and at last in the *fulness of time* he was born. For whom did he come? Not for his friends, but to die for his enemies. To whom did he come? He came to his own, and his own received him not. He took up his cross from his cradle, and he bore it with unfaltering steps to his tomb. It needs not to go over his painful history. It must be familiar to you all, and you have read it with singularly unreflecting minds, if the thought has not been forced upon you, How great is the grace that has done all this! Verily *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 8. He hath done all that was needed. He bore the penalty due to our sins—he paid the price that justice demanded for our redemption—he purchased the pardon that we needed, and now he offers the grace by which we must be saved.

A most singular objection has been started by some against the doctrine of salvation by grace. It is alleged that now since Christ has fully satisfied the justice of God, and bore the utmost penalty of the law, it is no longer grace, but simple justice, to pardon our sins, and receive us into favor. Strange that any such idea should enter any human breast! Was it not grace that prompted Christ to take our nature and die for us? Did justice require this sacrifice at *his* hands? Might he not have left us to

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the penalties that our own follies had entailed upon us? And was it not grace in God the Father to accept the offered atonement of Christ? Had he listened to the stern demands of justice alone, then each sinner must have borne for himself the full penalty of his transgressions. No, my hearers. It is but *justice to Christ* that all those should be redeemed whom he has chosen, and for whom he died; but it is grace to those for whom he died. *We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, Rom. iii. 24. Well might the apostle speak of the *riches of that grace*, and describe it as *exceeding abundant, for into these things the angels desire to look*, 1 Pet. i. 12.

4. Finally, the grace of God in our salvation is seen in the way in which it is made known and applied to us. Christ was not satisfied with simply procuring salvation for his people, though this alone required the sacrifice of his life. The grace that had done even this, was not yet exhausted. Of what avail would all his sufferings, and his most painful death have been, if not made known, and applied to us by the Almighty power of God. Our blinded hearts care little for things which rouse the curiosity of the heavenly hosts, and even when brought to our knowledge, so hardened are we in sin, that we will not receive salvation, till secretly forced thereto by the Holy Spirit. Behold here also the love of God! That grace which began the work, and purchased pardon also, makes it known, and applies it to our hearts. This salvation *began to be spoken at the first by the Lord himself*, Heb. ii. 3; for it was Jesus Christ who *came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them which were nigh*, Eph. ii. 17. He sent forth the apostles on the same errand; and when he left the world, he appointed an order of men, to continue till the end of time, whose sole business it is to proclaim this salvation, and administer its ordinances. Those who fill this most responsible office, have authority from himself, to offer it to all *without money, and without price*. The very object of this ministry is to show the grace of Christ. *Unto me*, says the apostle Paul, *who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery*, Eph. iii. 8, 9. In his name, my hearers, do I minister unto you. In virtue of his authority, do I invite you also to partake of this salvation. We to whom this ministry of reconciliation is entrusted, *are ambassadors for Christ*,

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as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 20.

How freely is the word of God dispensed to men. Even as the rain cometh down from heaven. So copiously, so refreshingly is it given, Is. lv. 10. Surely the grace of God is seen in the institution of that ministry which explains and proclaims it. But it is yet more evident. The mere preaching of the word, though it leaves all who hear it utterly without excuse, if they do not believe, is not alone sufficient. Mere attendance on ordinances does not save the soul. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God gives the increase*, 1 Cor. iii. 6. Without his blessing, no mere illumination of the understanding is sufficient. Herein also is his grace seen. Every other gift of Christ is made available to us by that last and exceeding precious gift which, when departing, he promised to his disciples—the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to form too high a conception of its value. It is the Spirit who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. It is the Spirit who opens our hearts to receive the truth. It is the "Spirit of God who makes the reading, and especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith, unto salvation." And how readily is it given! You know how to give good gifts to your children, but how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Think not that this gift can be bought. *Thy money perish with thee*, was Peter's indignant rebuke to Simon, *because thou hast thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money*, Acts viii. 20. In this, as in every other particular, *the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto men*, Tit. ii. 11.

Suffer me, in conclusion, to direct your minds to a particular contemplation of this subject. You have seen how in every step, salvation is entirely of grace. That it should be otherwise is seen to be impossible in the very nature of God, who cannot be laid under obligations to any of his creatures, and who in choosing any of our race to be partakers of his glory, is influenced by his own sovereign love alone. You have seen how in this gift of his Son to die for us, and in all his painful history, it is grace that shines pre-eminent. You have seen his grace in the appointment of the ministry of reconciliation, and more conspicuous in the free gift of his Holy Spirit to apply salvation to us.

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"Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man,
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

As it has been beautifully expressed, "It is not like a fringe of gold bordering the garment—not like an embroidery of gold, decorating the robe—but like the mercy-seat of the ancient tabernacle, which was gold—pure gold—all gold throughout.

By grace ye are saved! In the compass of this expression is included deliverance from all that is evil, and the bestowment of all that is good. Saved from the wrath of God—delivered from the power of Satan—freed from the chains of sin—sanctified in the inner man—called into the fellowship of the saints in light—and made partakers of eternal glory and blessedness, *and all this by grace!* Rejoice then in this exceeding grace of God. Fill your hearts with enlarged conceptions of it, till like the apostle, language shall fail ere you express its greatness. Meditate much upon it, and let your thankfulness for it find utterance in daily prayers and praises. Thus shall you daily find abundant cause to say with Mary, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*, Luke i. 46.

And whilst you rejoice, let it also humble you. Salvation by grace exalts God, but it abases man. You have nothing you can call your own but sin. You have not purchased nor deserved your salvation, nor can you. It is all of grace. *Where is boasting then?*

But this consideration is one full of all consolation to the believer. Is it all of grace? Then it is *sure.* There is nothing of human merit, or human goodness, which is but as the morning cloud and the early dew. It is all the gift of the perfect and unchanging Jehovah, and is therefore, like himself, perfect and unchangeable. Did your salvation depend on yourselves, you might well tremble; but it is the gift of God; and be assured, free as his gifts are, he will not throw them away, nor leave them unfinished. If he has begun a good work in you, his grace will assuredly carry it on to its final consummation. And in the meantime, whatever dangers or trials may attend you, or however dark your way may seem, put your trust in him, and fear not. He saith to the believer, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, and he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Macao, Sept. 1, 1844.

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SERMON XXX.

SAVING FAITH.

By grace are ye saved, through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.—Eph. ii. 8.

In the previous discourse from this text, an attempt was made to show how our salvation is entirely of grace. This was done by showing, that the character of God, who is independent of all his creatures; his sovereign election of some to everlasting life; his giving of his own Son to die for us all; the appointment of the ministry; and the free gift of the Holy Spirit—all require it to be of grace, and not of works. It is proposed in this discourse to show how we acquire an interest in that salvation, thus freely offered to our acceptance.

The work of man's salvation is a very great work. It involved an amount of preparation, and a degree of labor, and even of suffering, such as were never before seen in the universe. Heaven and earth were moved for its accomplishment, and the inmost depths of hell from beneath are stirred ere it is completed. The Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all combine to effect it. Satan and his legions oppose it. Ages and ages develop the mighty plan. Multitudes whom no man can number, are the objects it seeks to rescue. Its results stretch far off into the endless depths of eternity, and while they who oppose it are reserved to shame and everlasting contempt, *they that be wise and embrace it shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever*, Dan. xii. 2, 3.

The first emotions, in view of such a work, are almost those of discouragement. "Does our salvation require such expenditures to purchase it? such preparations to procure it? Do such momentous results depend upon it? Then how can it ever be secured? How is it possible for weak worms like ourselves to attain it? Such vast preparations on the part of God must require

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equal exertions on our part to meet them, and if so, we are unequal to the task, and must lie down in sorrow!" Such thoughts often occur. The idea that such salvation can be obtained without being merited on our part, is foreign to our minds. Hence the first question of every convinced sinner is, *What must I do to be saved?* Hence in proportion to the depth of his views of his own wickedness and danger, and of the greatness of this salvation, do his anticipations of exertion and sacrifice on his own part increase. Hence the anxious inquiry, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings and calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*, Mich. vi. 6, 7. Hence all the burdensome and expensive rites of all heathen actions, and the multiplied and painful ceremonies with which they hope to purchase a title to eternal life.

But the God of nature, and the God of grace, is one. In the natural world he accomplishes the mightiest works by the simplest means, and effects the most complicated motions by the application of a single force. It is the same in the economy of grace.

Look up to the heavens and consider the number of the stars. Extend your views of their countless hosts, to the widest limits of modern astronomy. Each one of those stars is a sun like our own, and the centre of a system more or less complicated than ours. Each system has its peculiar place and motion, and as far as our researches have extended, no two are alike. These all combine to form one constantly changing, moving, yet united whole. Behold how all these mighty worlds, amidst all their revolutions, are held together! By what means is this effected? What array of machinery can bind together systems so remote and so diverse? How is it possible that confusion should not enter in, and mar this glorious scene? Yet behold here the wisdom and the power of God. The extent of his dominions, and the variety of his creations are almost infinite, and yet one law pervades and regulates the whole. By one simple principle, he binds together the remotest star, and most eccentric comet, and regulates alike the falling of an apple or a feather to the ground. The mighty, yet simple and unseen principle of gravitation, is the bond that holds all these together.

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And in the economy of our redemption, it is one principle, equally simple and yet powerful, that binds man to his Creator, and regulates all his motions, and all his intercourse with him, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*, and that principle is *faith*. It is *unseen*, but not the less efficacious, for *the just shall live by faith*, Rom. i. 17. Perplexed and anxious sinner! Overwhelmed with a sense of sin, and fear of the wrath of God—alarmed at the power of Satan, and the multitude of your foes—astonished at the greatness of the work of your salvation, and anxiously inquiring, *What must I do to be saved?*—What shall bring me into friendly relations with God?—the answer is as simple as that which the Philosopher gives, when he is asked what binds the universe together—*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*, Acts xvi. 31. There is no need to seek after difficult and painful methods of salvation. There is no requirement of impossibilities. *The righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise. Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thine heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: that 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*, Rom. x. 6–9.

Such is the importance of faith in the plan of our salvation. *By grace are ye saved through faith.* It is the means, it is the instrument by which we lay hold of, and appropriate to ourselves, the grace of God, which bringeth salvation. Give me your attention then, whilst I endeavor to set before you its nature, and answer the question, *What is saving faith?*

It is important to remark, in the first place, that there are several kinds of faith mentioned in the New Testament, but that they do not all possess the efficacy to save the soul.

1. There is a *simple historical belief* of the truth of the Scriptures, which is possessed by the great majority of men in Christian lands. Those who possess this faith, believe the truth of what is in the Scriptures, just as they do the history of Livy, or the annals of Tacitus. They are perfectly sure that Jesus Christ lived and died, and performed many miracles, just as they are that Napoleon lived, and was a great general. This kind of faith is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It has no

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particular regard or affection for the truths it believes, and they have no practical effect upon the life. It is a faith that can be possessed by the bitterest enemies of God. Simon Magus saw the miracles of Philip, and believed, and wondered, and was even baptized. Yet this faith had no saving or sanctifying effect on his heart. He still abode *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity*, Acts viii. 23. There is no difference between this faith, and that possessed by the spirits of the lost, *Thou believest there is one God: thou doest well* (but the devils do more than this); *the devils also believe and tremble*, James ii. 19. Mere speculative knowledge and belief like this can never save us. No created being in the universe is better acquainted with theology, or has a firmer conviction of the truth and importance of religion than Satan has. But something more than this is wanted.

2. There is also a special kind of faith, commonly called *the faith of miracles*, by which those who possessed it were enabled to work miracles. This too was not necessarily accompanied with saving faith. Balaam possessed it, and uttered true prophecies, but died among the wicked. Judas Iscariot possessed it,—but died in his sin. Many in the Corinthian Church possessed this kind of faith, and abused it to the gratification of their own ambition and vanity; making a show of their miraculous gifts, and seeking applause and power by them. This led the apostle to say, *Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge: and though I have all faith: so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing*, 1 Cor. xiii. 2, —and Christ says, *Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, Matt. vii. 22, 23.

3. There is yet another description of faith, which is not saving. It is commonly called *temporary faith*, from the character of those who possess it. They are such as our Saviour compares to the stony ground, where the seed falls, and immediately springs up, because it has no deepness of earth, but when the sun is up, it is scorched and withered away. Even so, they in whose heart this temporary faith is found, endure but for a season, *for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended*, Matt. xiii. 5, 20. This faith therefore is easily known. It may seem very warm and vigorous, when all is pleasant; but

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as soon as difficulties or temptations arise, it is gone. It is not saving faith. *The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him,* Heb. x. 38.

4. The kind of faith which alone saves the soul, is that which has the Lord Jesus Christ for its special object; hence it is often called *the faith of Christ,* Phil. iii. 9. "It is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel."

This faith has several characteristics which deserve attention.

1. It is wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Everything connected with our salvation comes to us through the agency of the Holy Ghost. Naturally we are averse to believe in Christ, but the Spirit of God opens our hearts to receive the truth, and sets the character of Christ before us in its perfection, so that we are constrained to submit our souls to him. Hence, among the various titles given to the Holy Spirit, is also this, that he is *the Spirit of faith,* 2 Cor. iv. 13. And as this faith is wrought in our hearts by him, so it is built on a solid foundation. It does not rest on any mere fancies of our own, but on the word of the everlasting God. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,* Rom. x. 17. We are to receive Christ, only as he is offered to us in the gospel. If therefore your faith is founded on anything not there contained, it is unsound. Let this point be well attended to, for the opinion so often expressed, "It matters not what a man believes, provided he be sincere," is a great error. It does matter very much what you believe; for if you believe anything but what the word of God contains, then are you in danger of going down to death with a lie in your right hand. *It is the word of God alone which effectually worketh in you that believe,* 1 Thess. ii. 13. The people of God are chosen *to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,* 2 Thess. ii. 13, and are *born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever,* 1 Pet. i. 23.

2. This faith, wherever it exists, is always accompanied with repentance for sin, and a deep sense of one's own utter unworthiness and helplessness. Hence, when the apostle preached, *it was of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,* Acts xx. 21. When the Holy Spirit comes to convince men of sin, it is because they believe not in Christ, John xvi. 8, 9. It is not possible to believe on Christ heartily, and trust to him alone for salvation, as long as we have any confidence in ourselves, or

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any expectation of securing God's favor by our own good works. Hence, if we would believe on Christ, we must repent of our sins, and loathe ourselves on account of them. The question whether faith preceeds, or follows repentance, is one of little practical consequence, and should not be started. Both go together, and faith without repentance, or repentance without faith, are alike foolish and useless. If true repentance exist, it leads to an utter renunciation of self, and of all self-dependence. This cannot be illustrated more clearly, than in the experience of the apostle Paul, who said that *what things were gain to him, he counted loss for Christ*, Phil. iii. 7.

This renouncing of self, and all self-dependence, leads to the *main* thing in saving faith, and that is, a full conviction of the merits of Jesus Christ, and a full reliance upon them, and upon them alone, for the pardon of sins, for acceptance with God, and for complete salvation. The sinner, cut off from all confidence in himself, fully satisfied that he cannot by his own good deeds merit God's favor, and equally well satisfied that the grace of Christ is abundantly sufficient for him, throws himself upon his grace, and trusts to him alone. He makes no terms with Christ, but an unconditional surrender. He takes his soul, all guilty and polluted as it is, and lays it at the foot of the cross. He says to the Saviour, "Behold, oh Lord, one of thine unworthy creatures. I am full of sin, and deserve thine everlasting anger. If thou wilt, thou canst save me, but if thou wilt not, I perish forever, and perish justly. *God be merciful to me a sinner.*" This is the last, and highest, and hardest act the convinced sinner is called to perform. It is the hardest, because it implies so complete an abandonment of all merit, so perfect an abasement before God. It is the last, and the highest, because, when it is performed, then the sinner is no more a child of wrath, but a child of grace. Christ accepts the unconditional offer he makes,—clothes in his own righteousness, and he is saved. None ever came to him in this way, and were cast out. Heaven and earth shall pass away, before one sinner shall thus cast himself upon the mercy of God in Christ, and be rejected; and heaven, and earth, and time shall be no more, before one sinner shall ever be saved in any other way. This is the strait gate which leadeth unto life. If you clothe yourselves in your own righteousness, and burden yourselves with your own good deeds, you cannot enter—the door is too narrow. It was thus that Paul came, *I count all things but*

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loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

As already intimated, this unconditional surrender of the soul to the mere mercy of God, is the last act of the convinced sinner. Beyond this point, he feels that he can advance no farther. He has tried every resource within his reach; if this fails, he is without hope. Blessed be God, it never fails; and oh, how wonderful is the grace which accepts of him at this point! He has sought every possible means of saving himself, without having recourse to the grace of Christ; and it is only when he finds that there is absolutely no other means but that grace, that he submits to it. Why does not God refuse him then? Why does he not say, "You would not come to me, as long as you had any hope of saving yourself. After trying every other means, you seek this, not willingly, but as it were by constraint. Of what value is such a submission? *Walk in the light of your own fire, and in the sparks you have kindled. This shall ye have at my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow,*" Is. l. 11. I say, why does not God thus reprove and reject the half-despairing sinner? Sometimes it almost seems as though he were thus acting. The convinced soul lies before him long, and seems to experience no tokens of his favor. Fears distract his heart. Anxious questions arise and perplex him. *Will the Lord cast off forever, and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever, and doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he, in anger, shut up his tender mercies?* Ps. lxxvii. 7–8. But though such fears arise, he has no other hope. To whom else can he go?—for here alone are the words of eternal life. Therefore, he renewedly determines to seek salvation only in the cross of Christ. In the words of the hymn, his heart says:—

"If I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try.
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die."

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In the words of the patriarch of old, he says of God, *Though he slay me, I will trust in him*, Job xiii. 15. And in all ordinary cases he is not left long in suspense. In all such cases he is accepted, and sooner or later his faith is rewarded by sensible communications of the favor of God. Oftentimes his heart is overwhelmed with a sudden revelation of the love of Christ, and the penitential confession of sin, and supplication for mercy, is interrupted by the thanksgiving that bursts forth from a heart full of the grace and love of God. Verily Christ is able to save unto the uttermost, and none of those, no not one of those who come unto the Father by him, shall be cast out.

I have dwelt the more minutely on this point because it seems to be the turning point in Christian faith and experience. The other characteristics of saving faith require less detail.

4. Saving faith takes the word of God as its standard and rule in all cases. It believes all that he says, and simply because he says it. It does not ask, How can these things be? but is satisfied with *Thus saith the Lord.* It is differently affected according as different passages of the word of God are presented to it. Does it read his commands? then it seeks to obey, and perform all his commandments. Are his threatenings held up? It trembles and flees for shelter to the cross. Are the promises presented? It embraces them with joy. So too in all his providential dealings. Does he make the path of duty clear, then it goes forward with unfaltering step, though the pillar of cloud, and the guiding fire, lead it through the sea, or into the pathless wilderness. If no clear direction is given, it either seeks to know his will, or it quietly waits till his will be made known, as the Israelites in the wilderness, who journeyed not unless the cloud were taken up from the tabernacle. Is his way in the clouds and darkness, or in the deep waters? Faith submits to him. Does he send sore afflictions? It says, *Behold the hand of the Lord! He giveth and he taketh away, blessed be his holy name.* Is he harassed by doubts, and fears, and temptations? Still he waits upon the Lord, and seeks no unlawful means of deliverance. "This faith is different in degrees, weak and strong: it is often and many ways assailed and weakened, but it gets the victory: growing up in many (though not in all) to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author, and the finisher of our faith," Confession of Faith, xiv.

Such is the faith by which we are saved. It is of chief neces-

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sity, for it is the hand that lays hold of, and applies the merits of Christ, and without it, Christ is dead in vain.

Now in all this there is nothing for us to boast of. You have already seen the grace of God in providing salvation and offering it to us. The only thing we have to do in all this matter is to accept of the free gift that is held out to us. Is this a meritorious act? When you offer a beggar a piece of money, do you praise him because he puts out his hand and takes it? When you throw out a plank for a drowning man, do you think he performs a meritorious act by laying hold, and resting on it? No more then are we entitled to praise, or worthy of reward, by believing on Christ. Nay, more, the very faith by which we believe is not our own, *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

Thus is our whole salvation entirely of grace. From its first beginning in the secret counsels of God, through all the wonderful displays of wisdom and love by which it was acquired; in all the places whereby it is made known and applied to us; and in the faith by which we receive it, and by which we are led along to the inheritance of glory reserved for the saints—it is all of grace.

There are two practical questions of the greatest moment, with the answers to which this subject will be closed.

1. Since faith is the gift of God, how are we to obtain it? The question is simple, and the answer is equally so. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, Rom. x. 17. You have the word of God, it is your duty to read it. You can attend on the ordinances of God's house, it is your duty to do so, and the truths you thus learn are those which it is necessary to believe. If you find yourselves unable to believe, the remedy is plain. The disciples in old times found the same difficulty, and they came to Christ and prayed, *Lord increase our faith*, Luke xvii. 5. That prayer you too can offer, and if offered in sincerity it will be heard and answered, for it is one of those things which are included in the unconditional promise of the Holy Spirit. It is his work, to implant this faith in the heart, and you have but to ask, and it shall be implanted there. Say not, therefore, Faith is God's gift, and as he has not given it to me, I am not required to believe. Faith is God's gift, and if he has not given it to you it is because you would not have it. That you do not believe is your own fault, and not that of your Creator, for he is ready to bestow this gift upon you the moment you desire it. *He knows*

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what you have need of before you ask, Matt. vi. 8, *and it shall come to pass that while you call he will answer: and while you are yet speaking, he will hear*, Is. lxv. 24. You are therefore utterly without excuse if you do not believe.

2. The second question is, What is the connection between faith and good works? Men are ever prone to ask, What is the need of good works if we are justified by grace alone? Should we not rather continue in sin that grace may abound? Good works cannot save us, therefore they are useless and needless. It is difficult to answer such objections; their absurdity, and the ignorance they display, are so preposterous, and yet so pitiable. Those who make them are totally ignorant of the nature of faith. The connection between faith and good works is as intimate and indissoluble as between life and breathing. Did you ever see a living man without breath? Neither have you ever seen faith without good works. It is the very nature of faith that it produces good works, and if it does not produce good works, then it is not faith. *Faith works by love and purifies the heart*, Acts xv. 9. *Show me thy faith without thy works.* This you cannot do, for there is no such faith, or rather that is the mere historical faith already described and shown to be useless. But says the apostle, *I will show thee my faith by my works. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*, James ii. 18, 26.

This then is the connection between faith and works—*faith produces works.* This is a complete refutation of the objection just referred to, that if we are justified by faith alone works are needless. It cannot be too often repeated, that we are *justified by faith without the deeds of the law;* but neither can it be too carefully borne in mind that this justifying faith is such that its very nature is to produce good works, and if it does not produce them then it is not true faith, and you are not justified at all.

By this plan, therefore, of freely justifying man, the grace of God is most highly exalted, and yet the sanctification of the sinner, and the performance of every good work by him, are most effectually secured. *By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them*, Eph. ii. 8–10.

Macao. Sept. 8, 1844.

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SERMON XXXI.

THE GRACE OF GOD SUFFICIENT.

My grace is sufficient for thee.—2 Cor. xii. 9.

After our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no one person who is so prominently held up in the Scriptures as the example for Christians to imitate, as the apostle Paul. We are to *be followers of him, as he was of Christ*, 1 Cor. xi. 1. His experience is in many places recorded as that which all Christians have, Rom. vii., and the promises made to him are left for our consolation.

At one period in his life, he was favored with astonishing revelations of the grace of God; but they were intended only for himself. It was neither lawful nor possible for him to declare them; and such was his modesty, that fourteen years seem to have passed away, before he spake of them to any human being. Yet withal, these revelations were followed by peculiar temptations. Satan made use of them to puff him up with pride; and the Lord saw it necessary to send some sore affliction, *lest he should be exalted above measure*, 2 Cor. xii. 7. What this affliction was, does not appear. Evidently enough, it was some bodily distress or blemish, joined, most probably, to mental suffering, and altogether so severe, that the apostle earnestly desired to be freed from it. In imitation, perhaps, of our Lord's thrice offered prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, *he besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him.* His prayer was heard, but his request was not granted. He had asked for a thing which his compassionate Master saw was not for his own good, and the very favor he bore toward his servant, required him to continue the stroke at which he grieved. This should not be called a strange way of showing kindness; for it is precisely the course a judicious and affectionate earthly parent pursues towards a wandering child. One reason the apostle seems to have had, why he wished

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the *thorn in the flesh* to be removed, was his fear lest it should unfit him for labor, or injure his usefulness in the ministry. But though his request was refused, his fears on this point were quieted. *He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness;* and the effect of this promise on the apostle's mind, was instantaneous. It removed every fear; his heart bowed in sweet submission to the will of his Lord; and he ceased to regret that which caused him so much pain. *Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.* It may be remarked here, incidentally, that we have, in this part of the apostle's history, a good example of the nature and benefits of believing prayer; and of the nature of the answer we may expect, even when we do not pray for things that are strictly according to God's will. That the apostle prayed in faith, can scarcely be doubted; that he prayed earnestly, is evident; yet he did not receive what he requested, for it was neither for God's glory, nor his own good to grant it. But he obtained other blessings, more valuable than what he asked, even the grace of Christ, which not only sustained him under his trial, but turned it into a positive blessing to him. His own heart, while he prayed, was submissive to God; and when he found that his petition was not acceptable, he not only yielded to the will of God, but rejoiced in it, though contrary to what he had himself desired. Such a spirit in prayer will, in all cases, draw down blessings on the head of him who prays.

But our chief concern now is with the answer of our Lord to the petition of his servant. *My grace is sufficient for thee.* This was a special promise to the apostle; but there seems to be no good reason why it may not be lawfully applied to all those who are followers of him, as he was of Christ. He had great trials and temptations to bear, and arduous duties to perform, and the grace which was sufficient for him, must be equally efficacious for all who tread in his footsteps.

By the *grace of God*, in this promise, we are to understand, not so much the free favor of God, which is commonly signified by it, as one of the effects which flow to us from that favor. The *grace of God*, is here put for *the assistance and supporting influences of the Holy Spirit*, which are given to all God's people in conse-

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quence of his free grace, and form the firm and unfailing foundation on which they rest. Now of this grace it is emphatically said, *It is sufficient.* It matters not what the occasion be, for which it is needed, *it is sufficient.* Though the wise virgins had oil enough for themselves, what they had was not sufficient to supply their foolish neighbors, Matt. xxv. 9; but the grace of Christ is sufficient for all. The disciples, when asked in the wilderness to feed five thousand men, said that two hundred pennyworth of bread was *not sufficient* for them, that every one might take even a little; but the grace and power of Christ, made five barley-loaves and two small fishes more than sufficient for the whole multitude, John vi. 7–13. When God told Moses in the desert that he would feed the whole company of Israel with flesh, and that not for one or two days merely, but for a whole month, the faith of even that eminent man of God was staggered, and he asked, *Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?* Numb. xi. 22. But the hand of the Lord had not waxed short, and his word was sufficient to accomplish what even Moses deemed well nigh impossible. So it is with the grace of Christ. *It is sufficient for us*, no matter what the circumstances are in which we may be placed; and a consideration of some of those circumstances, and the grace of Christ as sufficient for them, may be of service to us in our heavenward course.

I. In the first place, then, the grace of Christ is *sufficient for us in the performance of every duty.* The present state of existence is one in which we have many duties to perform. This world is not our rest, it is our place of labor. The duties to which we are called ought to be a delight, a source of constant pleasure to the soul, but it is often far otherwise. Owing to our own native corruption and weakness, our duties are hard to perform. They oftentimes require labor, self-denial, patient watching, painful sacrifices. They run counter to the natural tendencies of our souls; we climb the Hill of Difficulty with laborious efforts; we descend into the Valley of Humiliation with reluctance. To profess to be on the Lord's side, and in so doing to meet with the opposition, and with the secret, or, it may be, the open contempt of men for so doing—to give up all we hold dear for Christ—to go for his sake to foreign lands—to lay down life itself, if need be, rather than deny his name—are duties to the performance of which every Christian is solemnly pledged. But I am far from

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thinking these to be the most difficult and painful duties he is called to perform. There is a spirit in man which will nerve him for the performance of extraordinary efforts occasionally, but will prove quite insufficient when tasked with the constant recurrence of ordinary exertion; and many who could brave the martyr's death, would fail in the humbler walks of Christian life. To persevere in the service of God for years; to maintain a consistent course of conduct; to continue instant in prayer; to resist the daily temptations of a Christian life; to mortify every sin; to cultivate every grace; and to honor God by a holy life;—these are far more important and far more difficult parts of our duty, than to cross oceans, perform splendid acts of self-denial, and to lay down life itself as a public sacrifice on the altar of religion. It is a comparatively easy thing to exercise those splendid virtues which are seen of men, and admired even by those who cannot appreciate the motives which induce them, but there is a more excellent, and a more difficult way than this. The charity that suffereth long, and is kind; the charity that envieth not; the charity that vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up, is of far more worth in the sight of God, than gifts of prophecy, and profoundness of knowledge, than faith that removes mountains, and ostentatious benevolence to the poor, or even giving the body to be burned, 1 Cor. xiii.

Now all these duties, both those that are public, and those performed in God's presence alone, are for us hard to be done. To the angels, to the glorified spirits in heaven, they are easy; but we are compassed about with infirmities; we are held back by a nature averse to all such exercises; and we are opposed both by an unfriendly world, and a host of evil spirits. These are the things which render it difficult for us to perform our duties. How shall creatures so weak as we perform so many? How shall we persevere, day after day and year after year, in the face of so many obstacles? Were it not better that we should die as soon as we become united to Christ, that so our salvation may be secured without this long and painful course of training, in which there is so much danger of our failure? No, Christian friends! The promise of our Lord comes to our relief. *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Nor is this a solitary promise. It is one that runs like a line of light throughout the Scriptures. It matters not how weak we are in ourselves; strength for the performance of duty comes from

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above. The Lord God helps the worm Jacob, *For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will keep thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel*, Is. xli. 13, 14. It is he that gives us strength, and that strength shall be more than sufficient, even where the most vigorous natural powers would fail. *He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint*, Is. xl. 29–31; xxv. 3, 4. Thus through his grace, we not only persevere, but are assured of a glorious termination to all our course of duty.

This strength is given us through the influences of the Holy Spirit. Hence it was the apostle's prayer for the Ephesians—as it should be the prayer of each of us for ourselves—*that God would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*, Eph. iii. 16.

For our encouragement in duty, numerous instances are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, where through the grace of God, even those who were weak were enabled to perform duty aright. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, God has often perfected praise, Ps. viii. 2. Even children in him are strong, for he called Jeremiah, when but a child, and made him *a defenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls against a whole land, with its kings and princes, its priests and people, who in their wickedness fought against him*, Jer. i. 5, 6, 18, 19. It enabled Moses, though slow of speech, and of a slow tongue, to stand before Pharaoh and his counsellors, and plead the cause of God's oppressed people. God never calls any man to perform duty for him, without also offering him the grace needful for the performance of that duty. Behold what grace did for those who had faith in God! *They subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness were made strong, and waxed valiant in fight*, Heb. xi. 33. But why multiply examples, when the apostle Paul stands before us as a living witness of the sufficiency of God's grace. None felt his own weakness more deeply than he. None had duties more arduous to perform than he. Hear then his triumphant declaration, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13;

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and let none be discouraged, when so bright an example as his is held up for our imitation. He was a man like ourselves. It was not his own strength that made him so eminent as a Christian, for he delighted to say, *By the grace of God, I am what I am*, 1 Cor. xv. 10; and that grace does not grow old, or become weak through the lapse of ages; the grace that made him what he was, can make us the same.

Here then is our encouragement. Fear not, my Christian friends, when called upon to perform any duty. He who calls you to its performance will give you the strength you need. Our sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6, and therefore we have hope. Look not at your own wickedness. Do not excuse yourselves when God calls you, for want of strength. Nay, the very sense of weakness will increase your strength, for while it will lead you to rely less on yourselves, where there is no strength, it will teach you to place your dependence on God who has all strength. This is the meaning of that apparent paradox of Paul's, *When I am weak, then am I strong*, 2 Cor. xii. 10. With this strength for your support you shall perform every duty. The reproaches of the world, the opposition of friends, the weakness of your own heart, and the strength of sin, and of Satan's temptations, shall not prevent you from performing the duties that belong to your Christian course. Greater is he that is for us, than all they that be against us, therefore be strong and hope unto the end.

II. The grace of Christ is also sufficient for us *in all times of temptation*. That every Christian is tempted by Satan to sin against God requires no proof. There are those who deny that evil angels have any such influence over us, but they are not found among those who believe the Bible to be the word of God. That Satan can force us to sin I do not believe. It is even our own fault if we yield to his temptations; but all Christians have their weak points, and unguarded hours, and he whose malice and boldness induced him to tempt even the Lord Jesus, is not averse to tempt every one of his followers. He knows little of his own heart and little of the *depths of Satan*, who does not know what temptations are; and he who has known them, will often and earnestly pray, *Lead me not into temptation.*

All the wiles of our great enemy, the wicked one, would have little power if they were not seconded by the evil *that dwells in us* —but joined with that they ofttimes make fearful havoc in the Christian's soul. Even the confirmed believer may be led into

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sin. The exhortation is, *Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. Your own experience must have already assured you that there is no place and no time when you are secured from his assaults. Have you not found evil suggestions thrown into your mind, when you bowed the knee in private prayer to God? Have you not found your hearts led out after vanities unto the ends of the earth, even when you came to the sanctuary to worship your Creator? Have you not found that even when most bent to do good, evil was present with you, and an evil, too, urged on, and fixed in your mind almost as by an influence from without? These temptations are as diversified as the varying dispositions of every man. Satan is well acquainted with the human heart, its affections, passions, and infirmities, and has an allurement, a charm, a threatening, for each. Some he tempts to despair, even of the free and boundless grace of God, and would have them to think their sins unpardonable. Some he tempts to presume, as though the Spirit of God could never be grieved, and thus while he leads one to vain confidence and false security, he plunges another in the depths of despair. He takes the dearest objects of our affections, and causes our hearts to rest upon them with an idolatrous love, thus setting up household gods, where the heart's best affection should be given to our Creator. Some he tempts to seek for pleasure and ease, avoiding the dangers, discomforts, and self-denials of a conscientious performance of duty. Some he tempts to sell their Lord, for the delights of this world. Where he cannot by his devices draw away the Christian from the path of duty, he endeavors to harass his mind with doubts and fears. If he cannot induce him to lie down and fold his hands in idleness, he tempts him to labor beyond his strength, and goads him with reproaches for inaction and uselessness. But it would be an endless task to enumerate all his devices, whereby he gains advantage of us. (2 Cor. ii. 11.) Be not ignorant of them, and in the time of temptation, remember where your strength lies. It is our joy, that *we have an high priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Even he was tempted in all points, like as we are*, Heb. iv. 15. *In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted*, Heb. ii. 18. He says to every tempted and perplexed believer, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* It often seems to the Christian, as though none had ever experienced the same temptations, and he

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feels as though he could not escape from them, but in both these points, you are probably mistaken. God watches all your danger, *There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 13. The Christian ofttimes hardly knows how his spiritual life is to be sustained, amidst so many assaults from his great foe, but God in his wisdom and grace can easily do it. He secretly casts in the oil of his grace, so that the flame burns hotter, notwithstanding the water that is cast upon it. Therefore in all times of temptation, look up to God for strength, and in dependence on that strength, *resist the devil, and he will flee from you*, James iv. 7. Take above all things else, *the shield of faith, whereby you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one*, Eph. vi. 16. If you feel your strength give way beneath the power of the tempter, cry mightily unto God, and soon you shall say to your confident and exulting adversary, *Rejoice not against me, oh mine enemy. When I fall, I shall arise again*, Mic. vii. 8.

III. Finally, the grace of Christ is sufficient for the support of every believer in all times of sorrow and distress, whether bodily or mental. Sorrows are the portion of our race. I am not one of those who look on this world as a vale of tears alone, for it has abundant stores of joy; and there are few whose happiness would not be much greater than it is, were they to seek it in the proper course. Yet still it is true, *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*, Job xiv. 1. To enter into particulars in proof of this is needless. You have but to recall the histories of your own acquaintances, and the scenes of your own past lives, and very few of you will deny that

A sad inheritance is ours.

The Christian whose heart is rightly exercised, will acknowledge that all his sorrows come from a Father's hand, and are sent for his good; and yet even he will find them hard to bear, for in the truthful language of the apostle, *No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*, Heb. xii. 11. Oftentimes too, God is pleased to visit his children with repeated affliction. Sorrow after sorrow comes upon them. *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of his waterspouts, all his waves and billows go over them*, Ps. xlii. 7; and their soul is melted in them for heaviness. If the Christian

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were left to himself, to bear by the unaided fortitude of his own spirit the distresses that ofttimes come upon him, he would soon sink beneath the load. But he is not left to himself. A voice comes to him in the depths of his sorrow, saying, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* When distresses are most numerous, it says to him, *When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,* Is. xliii. 2; and his own experience furnishes the most eloquent commentary to the promise. Have you not often found his grace supporting you in affliction? A dark cloud arose in your horizon, and you gazed upon its gloomy outline with anxious forebodings. It drew nearer, and filled your heart with dread. You feared as you entered the cloud, and yet when it passed away, you were refreshed with its gentle rain, and gazed even with delight upon the rainbow which remained. Has it not been so? You have shrunk from the trial that has hung over you. You have thought you could not endure it—you have prayed that if possible it might pass from you, and yet when it came, though you felt it deeply, you have been sustained and upheld in a manner that you could not have thought possible; and though for the time it was grievous, yet you have found it followed by the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And is not the grace that was sufficient for you in times past equally powerful for the time to come? Do not dishonor God by your fears, *but come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,* Heb. iv. 16.

It may be that you fear death; that though you can look on other trials with composure, yet you apprehend that when your last hour shall come, you shall not be able to endure. But why should you fear? Hath he not said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,* Heb. xiii. 5. Hath not your compassionate Saviour himself passed through the gates of death, and slept in the grave, and will he not be with you there? Then fear not. His grace has caused others to go through the dark valley of the shadow of death with peace and with joy; and putting your trust in him, his grace shall be sufficient for you, even in that trying hour. *Though flesh and heart fail, yet God shall be the strength of your heart and your portion forever,* Ps. lxxii. 26.

How glorious are the promises of God to those who put their trust in him! Some are minute and particular, as when he is

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told that the very hairs of his head are all numbered; but others are wide and comprehensive, even as the grace of God itself. Such is the promise we have been considering. Its tones fall upon the Christian ear, making sweet melody there, and if he will, he may hear it when the tempest roars, as well as when the evening airs are gently breathing. He may hear it and rejoice in it, when Satan's temptations come like a fiery blast upon his soul; he may draw consolation from it, when he wanders alone in the wilderness; when friends all die, and cherished hopes all fail, and earthly resources are all cut off, the promise remains as firm as the throne of God himself. He abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself, and he saith, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* It is a compend of that glorious promise given to Israel of old by the hand of Moses. *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass: and as thy days, so shall thy strength be. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms, and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them,* Deut. xxxiii. 25–27.

The joy with which the ministers of God proclaim these precious and soul-sustaining promises is great, and yet it is one not unmingled with sadness. They are not for all. The unbelieving, the careless, the worldly-minded, have no part or lot in this matter. The grace that is sufficient for others, is not sufficient for you, for you receive the news of it with unconcern. Of what avail is it to you that such grace is offered?

I beseech you, my hearers, let none take comfort in this promise, except those that have a right to it. It is intended only for the humble believer in Christ, who feels his need of his grace, and earnestly desires to obtain it. *For all such it is sufficient.*

Macao, September 29, 1844.

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SERMON XXXII.

CONNECTION OF DIVINE AGENCY WITH HUMAN EFFORTS.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.—PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

THE intercourse between the apostle Paul and the church at Philippi seems to have been always of the most affectionate kind. Many things conspired to make him regard them with peculiar interest. It was in this city that he first preached the gospel to a European audience. It was here that he received the first fruits promised to him, when he saw in vision the man of Macedonia imploring his help. It was here that Lydia lived, whose heart the Lord opened that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul, Acts xvi. 14. It was here too, that being imprisoned and beaten and confined in the inner prison with their feet fast in the stocks, the love and grace of God so filled the hearts of Paul and Silas, that at midnight they prayed and sang praises. The astonished jailer acknowledged the power of the religion they preached. And when they departed from the city they were followed by the affectionate regards of the brethren, and were often cheered by their kind remembrances. When Paul was in Thessalonica, the church at Philippi sent once and again to supply his necessities; *and they alone of all the churches of Macedonia communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving*, Phil. iv. 15, 16. They were attentive to his instructions while present with them, and obedient when he was absent. Therefore in this epistle his affection for them is very plainly shown, and he styles them his *brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, his joy and his crown*, iv. 1.

In the text he exhorts them to continued obedience to the gospel, and to a holy life. He had just before described the deep

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humility and exemplary obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *humbled himself and became obedient unto death*, v. 8, and had proposed him as the example and pattern for their imitation, chap. ii. 5–8. It was a great work they had to do, to secure their salvation, and without taking upon them the yoke of Christ, and learning of him, *who was meek and lowly in mind*, Matt. xi. 29, they could not do it. *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Let us attend to this exhortation of the apostle. There are some men who think that because salvation is by grace, their works are useless, and that since it is given us *without merits* on our part, it is also given *without efforts*. This is a very convenient excuse for the sluggard, and the fatalist; but it is surely a very great mistake, and it is a mistake too, proceeding from an ignorance of the Scriptures truly wonderful. You cannot open a page of the Bible without seeing the contrary, and repeated and enforced in so many ways, that even the most careless could scarce fail of seeing it. No part of the Scriptures encourage the idea that heaven can be gained by mere blind fate, or chance. On the contrary our Lord tells us in strong language, that *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*, Matt. xi. 12, and both in the Old and in the New Testament, the great benefit and the absolute necessity of exertion on our part is clearly set forth. Thus we are told in the Proverbs of Solomon, that *the labor of the righteous tendeth to life*, Prov. x. 16, while both in natural and in spiritual things it is true that poverty and want come upon the slothful and inactive.

Some men are apt to busy themselves with curious questions; asking about the decrees and purposes of God; the probable number of those who shall be saved, and other things which are of no manner of importance; quite forgetting that it is our place *to do* the open and revealed will of God, and not to meddle too curiously in things which he has reserved to his own power. When the disciples came to Christ with one of these questions, he declined giving them a direct answer. *One said unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*, Luke xiii. 23, 24. As if he had said, "Do not trouble yourselves with useless inquiries about the condition of others. Make your own calling and election sure."

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None preached more clearly than the apostle Paul, the doctrine of salvation by free grace without human merit; and yet none insisted more strenuously than he on the necessity of works on man's part. To hear his exhortations, and mark his example, you would suppose he thought our whole salvation depended on ourselves. Hear him saying to the Corinthians, *My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Hear him saying to the Hebrews, *Let us labor to enter into the rest*, Heb. iv. 11, and again, *We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, unto the full assurance of hope unto the end*, Heb. vi. 11. His own example is full of instruction on this point. He was assured of his own salvation, yet he did not on that account intermit or relax his exertions. On the contrary in this very epistle he describes himself, as using every effort, as *reaching forth unto those things that are before, and pressing toward the mark for the prize of his high calling*, Phil. iii. 13, 14. No man who takes the apostle Paul for his model, will ever sit idly down or dream of being carried to heaven

"On flowery beds of ease."

Hence all his comparisons by which he illustrates the Christian life, teach the necessity of exertion on our part; as he walked on foot from city to city, he saw the husbandmen pursuing their avocations, and reaping in their harvest. Seizing the idea, he exhorts the Galatians, *not to be weary in well doing, for in due season, we shall reap if we faint not*, Gal. vi. 7–9. As he preached in the cities of Greece, he had frequent opportunities of beholding the foot-races, and athletic contests of the Olympic, and other games; and the strenuous exertions of these contestors, furnishes one of his most frequent and forcible comparisons. He exhorts the Hebrews to *run with patience the race set before them*, Heb. xii. 1, and to the Corinthians, who were especially familiar with such games, he says, *Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore do run not as uncertainly. So fight I not as one that beateth the air*, 1 Cor. ix. 24–26. And when he would cheer the disciples' hearts it is not by saying that they had no work to do, but that their work when done should meet an abundant reward. To the

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Romans he said, that those who *patiently continued in well-doing, should obtain eternal life,* Rom. ii. 7, and to the Hebrews, that *God would not forget their work and labor of love,* Heb. vi. 10.

It were an easy thing to multiply similar quotations, but sufficient has been adduced to show, that in the business of our salvation we must work. These are plain truths, too plain to be mistaken or evaded, nor can they be altered or interpreted differently by comparing with them any other part of God's truths. His revelations are like himself, *consistent,* and what he has elsewhere declared of his secret purposes, must be understood in a manner perfectly consistent with the duty here so plainly enjoined.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. It is a great work to secure our salvation. It is great in itself, for its effects concern our highest well-being, and its results stretch out into the distant depths of eternity. It is great too, because it has to be prosecuted amidst much opposition and difficulty. In this work, much depends upon ourselves, and there is the strongest call for much watchfulness, and even solicitude in regard to the result. It is with fear and trembling, with watchfulness and prayer, that we must enter into the kingdom of God. You cannot sit down and fold your hands if you wish to be saved. You cannot be an unconcerned spectator, but must yourself take an active, yea, a prominent part, in the contest, that shall decide your own soul's eternal weal and woe. And such a contest cannot be without *fear and trembling.*

The true believer is one who fears always. He fears God for his greatness, and glory, and holiness; he fears the spirits of evil, for their malice and cunning and varied wiles; he fears himself, for he knows the deep sinfulness and deceitfulness of his own heart; he fears the world, for he knows by painful experience its many allurements and seducing wiles; and when he contemplates his own salvation, the magnitude of the interests involved, and the danger of failure, he cannot but fear. *Happy is the man who feareth always,* Prov. xxviii. 14.

Yet this fear and trembling, it should be observed, does not imply any want of faith in God, nor the absence of peace and joy in the heart. It is perfectly compatible with joy in God. We are commanded to *serve the Lord with fear, and to rejoice with trembling,* Ps. ii. 11. The purest joy, and the fullest confidence may fill the believer's heart, when his *flesh trembles for fear of God,* Ps. cxix. 120. This may sound paradoxical, but it is Christian

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experience notwithstanding. When the angel informed the women at the sepulchre, of the resurrection of Christ, two emotions filled their hearts, *And they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, and did run to bring the disciples word*, Matt. xxviii. 8. This fear is perfectly compatible even with the assurance of salvation. Hence the apostle says, *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire*, Heb. xii. 28, 29. (Compare 1 Cor. ii. 3.)

The work of our salvation is a very great work. Great in itself, for it is nothing less than life from the dead; great in its connection with others, for it enlists the sympathies of three worlds,

> "Hell moves beneath to work our death.
> Heaven stoops to give us life."

Great too in its wide-spread and unending results. Who then is sufficient for these things? Is it not mockery in the apostle to exhort us to work out our own salvation? for what can creatures, so utterly *without strength*, as we, perform?

But that which we cannot do God does. *In due time when we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly*, Rom. v. 6; and when *we were dead in trespasses and sins, he quickened us by his grace*, Eph. ii. 5.

It is difficult for us to define the limits where human agency ceases and God's power commences. But to do so is a matter of no consequence; in practical experience all is plain enough; and hence the apostle, immediately after exhorting the Philippians to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, adds, as the reason why they should do so, *For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do.* As if he had said, Work with all your powers, use all diligence, and be assured of success, for God will give you strength. A parallel case to this, is found in the man with the withered hand whom Jesus cured. Our Lord said to the man, *Stretch forth thy hand.* The man had no strength, he could not of himself stretch forth his hand, for it hung withered and dead by his side. Yet he did not object to the command of the Lord, as though it were an impossibility, but obeyed it. Along with the command strength was given, *And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like as the other*, Matt. xii. 13.

Thus it is in the business of our salvation. It is God who worketh in us. This is a truth often repeated, and especially

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acknowledged in the prayers of all true believers. He worketh in us both to will and to do. It is he who implants the desire for salvation, and the willingness to obey in our hearts; and it is he who gives us grace to obey and strength to obtain that salvation. Hence the prayer of David, *Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me,* Ps. li. 10. Hence the confession of the church in Isaiah, *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works in us,* Is. xxvi. 12. Hence the prayer of the apostle for the Hebrews, that God would *make them perfect in every good work to do his will. Working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight,* Heb. xiii. 21. Thus the people of God are *made willing in the day of his power,* Ps. cx. 3, and that for which in ourselves we are insufficient is accomplished by the mighty power of God working in us.

It is here to be observed, that God's working in us, is not attributed by the apostle, to anything in ourselves, which induces him thus to work. It is entirely *of his good pleasure.* He gives no account of his matters. He does not tell us why he works in one, and not in all; but in his sovereignty dispenses his favors as he will. To some men the sovereignty of God is an unlovely attribute; nor do they wish to hear that *he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth,* Dan. iv. 35. But to the true child of God there is none in the whole compass of revelation so delightful, so full of all consolation. Is God the Holy and the Just One, a sovereign Ruler? Then assuredly all shall be well. Under his perfect administration and firm control nothing shall occur for which abundant reason shall not in due time be given. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice,* Ps. xcvii. 1.

The consideration of this subject furnishes us with several topics for practical remark:—

1. Some men are greatly troubled with the doctrines of God's sovereignty and free grace; and this, not so much because they are not clearly revealed in the Scriptures, as because they know not how to reconcile them with man's freedom and duty. They cannot see how God can be a sovereign, doing all things according to his own pleasure, and yet man remain a free and accountable being; how salvation is entirely of grace, and yet works a matter of chief necessity. These are questions most fruitful in controversies, and by them the peace of the church has been for many ages disturbed. And yet they are purely theoretical ques-

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tions. The apostle Paul found no difficulty in reconciling the two doctrines. He brings them in the closest connection, and seems utterly unconscious that there is the slightest incongruity between them. *Work out your own salvation*, Why? *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.* And there is no incongruity. Christian experience in all ages testifies that there is none. They who are most active in every good work, and most successful in their exertions in the cause of God, are the foremost to ascribe their success and their strength to labor, entirely to him. Witness the declarations of David, when he had with *all his might prepared for the house of his God both gold and silver, and iron and brass, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.* He willingly offered all these things, and beheld with joy his people offering willingly unto God. *Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people that we should be able* (*in the margin, obtain strength*) *to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*, 1 Chron. xxix. 2, 13, 14, 17. The records of Christian biography are full of similar examples, and the spontaneous feelings of every Christian heart confirms them. Have you not felt, at any time when your efforts have been greatly blessed, that while you have done only what you felt you ought to do, yet without God's blessing your efforts would have been useless? Your own heart would have blamed you if you had not done all you did; and yet your own heart said, *Not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory*, Ps. cxv. 1. These facts may exceed the power of our philosophy to explain, but they do not exceed the power of our natures to feel, and philosophy must learn, when experience speaks.

2. Learn, hence, the necessity and advantage of looking to God in every time of duty or trial, for strength and grace. Behold the sailor as he pursues his course across the ocean. His is no life of ease, or freedom from care and anxiety; and yet of what avail were all his labors, were it not for the free winds of heaven, which God sends to speed him on his way? He has no power to call the winds from their hidden caves. He has no art by which he can cause propitious gales to blow, and when his ship lies motionless in the calm, can a more perfect picture of utter helplessness be imagined, than is seen in the noble vessel, whose dark sides and useless sails are mirrored in the glassy waters? But does this

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utter helplessness, this total want of control over the elements, release him from the necessity of laboring? Doth he not on that very account watch the clouds, and mark the courses of the winds with increased diligence? Does he not shorten sail, or spread his canvass, and steer his ship so as to gain every possible advantage which God is pleased to put within his reach? And should he not, when he reaches his desired haven, acknowledge the goodness of him, who, holding the winds in his fist, has granted him to end his voyage in safety? And such is Christian duty. It is ours to labor. It is God's to bless. It is ours to spread the sails, and the Spirit's influences blowing *like the wind, where it listeth*, shall waft us to the port of eternal rest.

3. Hence, also, you may draw abundant encouragement in all your efforts to secure salvation. Your heart often trembles when you reflect on the greatness of the work, and the dangers that oppose. Your hopes almost fail at times, when you think of the length of the way. It is with fear and trembling that you pursue your course, and well it may be so. Yet, be not dismayed. An unseen eye is watching over you. An unseen arm is stretched out for your defence; almighty power is enlisted on your behalf. *It is God who worketh in you*, and when did he ever work in vain? If *he hath begun a good work in you, he will surely perform it to the day of Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6, for it is not the manner of God to leave his work unfinished, or throw away that on which he hath begun to bestow labor. Have holy thoughts begun to arise in your hearts? do desires after the presence, and favor, and likeness of God enter your minds? Then cherish them carefully. It is God who worketh in you to will, to desire such things, and if you put not away his first influences, he will also work in you to do all his holy will; and then, *after you have suffered awhile, he will also make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you*, 1 Pet. v. 10.

4. Finally. This subject affords a test of your character, for self-examination. Is it God who worketh in you both to will and to do? what then is the character of your works? Are your works such as reflect honor on God? Are your thoughts such as come from a holy God? *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his Spirit*, 1 John iv. 13.

Macao, October 20, 1844.

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SERMON XXXIII.

THE DISCIPLES IN THE STORM.

And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.—JOHN vi. 16–21.

THE miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ were most remarkable events, in whatever light we choose to regard them. The power displayed in them, and the frequency with which they occurred, were equally wonderful. Daily he went about doing good, and daily mighty works were performed by him, until the beloved disciple was forced to say that the world itself could not contain the books in which a full account of all he did should be recorded. It must be an exhaustless fountain from which such copious streams proceed.

But these miracles were not performed merely to excite an empty admiration. They were intended, not only to excite our attention and reverence, and to confirm our faith, but also to give us solid and abiding instructions. The *instructive character* of the miracles of Christ is often overlooked; and yet to one who considers them rightly, this is not less wonderful than their frequency and power. But our wonder is diminished, though not our admiration, when we consider who performed them. It was Christ who never spake one idle word, nor performed one unmeaning action. He had planned before, the reason and manner of everything he did, and had disposed, according to his own wisdom, the multiplied relations of every action. Instruction therefore may be expected, and should be sought in every part of his life; because it may be said (without violence to the words of the apos-

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tle), *These things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come,* 1 Cor. x. 11.

In the miracle of which the text is the record, there is but little that requires explanation. It is a simple narrative of one of the actions of our Saviour; and though the narrative given by the apostle John is shorter than those of Matthew and Mark, there is nothing in it that differs from them, or renders particular reference to them needful. I propose therefore to dwell chiefly on the practical lessons it affords.

It occurred within twenty-four hours after the miracle of feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. Our Lord was not eager to display his miraculous powers, or to gain the applause of men by his mighty works. He was equally ready to perform them in the city or in the desert; in the presence and for the sake of ten thousand spectators, or with the knowledge, and for the sake of ten, or even of one. When the proud Herod *hoped to have seen some miracle done by him,* he refused to gratify his vain curiosity, Luke xxiii. 9, 10; but he never refused the solitary and obscure applicants who needed his aid.

He had been on the east side of the sea of Tiberias when the miracle of multiplying the five loaves was performed. Immediately afterwards, *he constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and go before him to the other side, while he sent the multitudes away,* Matt. xiv. 22. When this was done, forgetful of his own need of rest, he retired into a mountain apart to pray, and, as it appears, he spent the greater part of the night in prayer to God. Mark vi. 47, 48.

The disciples started in their little vessel to go to Capernaum, a distance of perhaps eight or nine miles: but short as the distance was, the way proved exceedingly tedious. The wind being contrary, they were obliged to row the boat; and one of the sudden and violent squalls which often disturb that lake, raised the waves so high as to cause them great toil and labor at the oars, and even to put their lives in danger. *The sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.* In this way they had gone about half-way over the lake. It had long been dark, and yet Jesus was not come unto them. Midnight was now passed, and it drew towards the morning watch, and still they saw him not.

How different was their condition now, from what it had been but a few hours before. Then Jesus miraculously fed them, and his kind and gracious words were even sweeter than the

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bread they ate. They sat on the green grass, while their Shepherd fed them with living bread, and they followed his voice, while he led them by the still waters. Like Peter in the mount of transfiguration, they were ready to say, *It is good to be here, let us make tabernacles and abide.* But now they were on the dark and boisterous sea, tossed with the waves, in danger and alone, for *Jesus was not come unto them.* In all this, their condition was an exact picture of Christian experience. There are but few of God's children who do not experience many, and oftentimes painful fluctuations of feeling in their heavenward course. There are some, whose course is like that of the *just man, shining more and more unto the perfect day,* Prov. iv. 18, but with most it is far different. One day, they feast upon the richest provisions of the heavenly kingdom, and eat angels' food, while peace and joy, and love to a present Saviour, fill their hearts. The next day, they are tossed upon a sea of troubles, from which they can discern no prospect of deliverance. They cannot penetrate the gloom around them, nor behold the face of their Saviour, in whose smiles they had basked but the day before. There is a constant analogy in the occurrences of the natural and of the spiritual world, for God has so arranged the one that it forms a sort of commentary to the other. No day passes without its lights and shadows; few seasons of calm without a following storm. I may say therefore, to any follower of Christ now present, who suffers under these painful changes of feeling, Be not discouraged. Your case is by no means singular. That you once possessed joy in God, and now are without it, does not prove that you are not truly his, for we may be in great joy, and yet soon fall into the depths of sorrow. We may sit with the disciples while Jesus breaks and gives the bread of life; and we may toil with them on the stormy sea, when Jesus is far away. But where was our Saviour all this time? Probably Satan took this opportunity of suggesting to the disciples many distressing thoughts respecting him, and doubts of his love and kindness. There was no room for such temptations while they sat on the grass, and heard his words, and saw his miracles; but now when alone and in danger, was the time for the great enemy to work, and he did it but too successfully; *they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened,* Mark vi. 52. It is thus that we give the devil advantage over us. We remember not the former kindnesses of our Lord, when present distress is upon us; and hence hard thoughts of him arise,

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and doubts of his love. Perhaps the disciples were ready to ask, "Why did our Master constrain us so earnestly to depart, when he must have foreseen the coming storm? Why does he, who has such power over the elements, suffer this storm to arise? Why, when we are in the path which he himself commanded us to take, does he suffer us to be placed in difficulty and danger? Why does he not now appear for our relief?" Fellow-Christian, have you not often asked such questions, when you were met by unexpected difficulties, in what you supposed to be the path of duty? Have you not been tempted at times to relinquish some undertaking for God's glory, when you found yourselves impeded in its prosecution? Consider carefully the case of the disciples in the storm before you suffer such questions to arise, or such undertakings to be abandoned.

The greater part of that night was spent by Christ in secret prayer. Often, even when wearied with his labors among the people, he spent whole nights in prayer to God. It is not for us to ask the subject of his devotions; for who knows or can conceive of the communion of infinite intelligences, bound together by a union so close and intimate as that of the persons of the Trinity? But there is no doubt that he prayed for his disciples. He was away from them, for they were on the sea, and he was on the land alone. Yet the evangelist Mark, tells us expressly that *he saw them toiling in rowing.* He prayed for them. He prayed for all that should believe on his name, through their word. He often prays for his people when the storm rages around them; and though they see him not, he watches over them, and cares for their welfare. They may be in outward sorrow, or in bodily danger, in the storm at sea, or the battle on land, or on the bed of acute or of wasting disease; and his hand is still stretched out for their support and relief. Or, they may be exercised with mental distress, far harder to bear than any bodily suffering. They may feel the pains of disappointed hopes, and blasted expectations, the unkindness of friends, or the loss of beloved objects of affection; they may be tried with Satan's sore temptations, with the uprising of the heart's natural wickedness; or, worse than all, with the crushing apprehension of God's displeasure; but it is well in all these cases to remember that we have an *high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for he was in all points tempted like as we are,* Heb. iv. 15. *He*

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will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but will with the temptation, make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

He did not forget his disciples in their distress, and when they began to be exhausted with their labors he made his appearance. The darkest time is often just before the dawn—the period when hope is almost abandoned is often followed by the joy of full deliverance and success. It was so with the disciples; it is often so in Christian experience now.

About the fourth watch of the night, or shortly before the dawn of the day, Jesus came to them. *They see Jesus walking upon the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship.* Very strange are the ways in which oftentimes God is pleased to deliver his people. The very waves that threatened to overwhelm the disciples were as the solid ground on which the Saviour walked to rescue them; and thus God often uses the things which most we fear to deliver us from the evils we dread.

> "Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercies, and shall break
> In blessings on your head."

It was truly a wonderful manifestation of the Divine power which the disciples now beheld. But so strange and unexpected was this appearance of Christ, that they were greatly terrified. In the dimness and gloom of the storm and driving spray, they saw a human figure moving over the boisterous waves, and approaching their vessel. Supposing that it was a spirit, they cried out for fear. Their mistake, and their fear was natural enough, and probably each of us, in the same circumstances, would have been similarly affected. And yet we have in their fear another proof, if proof were needed, of the blindness and ignorance of men. They wished for Christ to come, and would have rejoiced in his presence; and yet because he came not in the way they expected, they failed to perceive that it was he, and being terrified at his presence, they even wished him away. The Lord's ways of dealing with his people are at times strange enough. They wish for peace and happiness, and pray for his favor; and in answer to their prayers, he suffers the inmost depths of their hearts to be stirred with sorrow. Yet when the season of distress passes away a calm remains such as they never knew before. As in the natural world, the thunder-storm, and the black clouds, are followed

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by a purity and clearness in the atmosphere unfelt before. Thus *the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet*, Nah. i. 3. But we are like nervous persons who even in time of drought are afraid of the dark thunder-cloud. Our moral system is out of order, and we fear the remedies which our gracious Physician is pleased to employ.

To calm the disciples' fears, Jesus spake to them. They were but few words that he uttered, but they possessed a more than magical power, *It is I, be not afraid.* These are wonderful words. They show us the grace and power of our Lord, the simple announcement of whose presence was sufficient to calm the fears of his disciples in danger, and reassure their hopes. And how great must be his love to his creatures, when his simple presence is the ground of their safety! It is as though he had said, "It is I; you know that I love you; you know my power to save; you know that no danger can befall you as long as I am near—Be not afraid."

And yet why did not this announcement of his presence fill their minds with even greater terror? Bring the inhabitant of another world, and bid him look upon the scene we are now considering. Tell him that one of these parties is the great and just God, a lover of holiness, and avenger of sin; that he should be the final Judge of all. Tell him that the others were his creatures, who had all their lives long been rebels, full of sin, and worthy of destruction; and that even since they had commenced the service of Christ, they had frequently provoked him. Would he not at once predict their utter destruction? Would he not say, that the storm was only the precursor of the divine wrath, and that the Judge had now come in person to execute it? But whatever he might think or say, it was not on such an errand that Christ came. He came not to destroy, but to save. He came to do them good; and so much love filled his heart that the mere fact of his presence is a ground of hope and confidence, instead of fear and dismay.

The death of Christ has wrought great things for us, in which we do well to rejoice. *Before*, we could approach to God, only as a just judge, who would surely take vengeance on our sins. *Now*, we have access with confidence by the faith of him. *Before*, the announcement of his presence would fill us with terror, and like our first parents after their fall, we should flee to hide in the thickest of the wood. *Now*, no sound is so full of consolation as the voice of our Saviour saying, *It is I, be not afraid.*

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It is especially in times of danger and distress, that the presence of Christ is valued by the child of God. It is pleasant to see him in the sunshine and the calm, though in such seasons the Christian is too apt to forget his need of him. But when difficulties arise—when Satan's temptations vex the heart—when the light of God's countenance is withdrawn—or when we are in sore distress of body, or mourning under disappointments and bereavements, then there is a charm in the words, *It is I, be not afraid*, that human language cannot express. And why should not the Christian hear those words in every such season of trial? You believe, or you ought to believe, that nothing happens to you by chance; that if you are in difficulties, it is by the appointment, or the permission of your gracious Saviour.

Go forward, then, cheerfully in the path of duty. Difficulties may befall you there; for when the disciples obeyed the command of Christ, and attempted to cross the sea of Galilee, they were met by a storm, and exposed to danger. Be not discouraged if difficulties meet you, but look to your Saviour for help, and he will surely succor you. His assistance may seem to tarry long. Like the disciples, you may toil in rowing nearly all the night, but in due season he will appear for your relief. But do not expect that he will bring it to you in the way that you would have chosen. The disciples greatly desired the presence of Christ, but they little thought that he should come walking on the waters.

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps on the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

Miracles followed miracles in close succession in the life of Christ. No sooner had he said, *It is I: be not afraid*, than the disciples received him into their ship, and immediately the wind ceased, Matt. xiv. 32; and while they were wondering at this, *immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.* How great was the power of Christ, contrasted with the weakness of man! The disciples had toiled all the night, and scarcely advanced more than twenty-five or thirty furlongs. The presence of Christ stilled the waves, and a word from him carried their ship in an instant farther than they had advanced through the whole night. Here, too, is a lesson which the Christian would do well to bear in mind. Even when you engage in the performance of what is

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evidently your duty, you need the presence and assistance of your Saviour. The work will go slowly forward, if you hear not his voice saying, *It is I.*

Let, then, the consideration of this subject teach us all, above all things else, to desire the presence and blessing of our Saviour. With that, you can never be alone. With that, you can never fail in duty. With that, you can never suffer harm. With that you can go through the valley of the shadow of death unmoved. When the last solemn scene in the world's great drama is closed, and when all flesh stand together before the bar of God, fear and trembling shall seize the hearts of some, and they shall call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of the Lamb. But the words that he shall then speak unto his own chosen ones, will seem but the echo of what he said to the disciples, *It is I: be not afraid*, and the righteous shall look upon him without fear. They shall see in him the Saviour who loved and sustained them on earth, and who died that they might live; and they shall rejoice in the prospect of an eternity in his presence.

"'Mid the glorious songs above,
And praises of redeeming love, *It is I*
Will give thee peaceful rest;
In my courts thy home shall be.
'Mid happiness, I'll render thee *forever blest.*"

Macao, October 27, 1844.

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SERMON XXXIV.

OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE IMPERFECT.

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.—JOHN xiii. 7.

THESE words were spoken by our Saviour, on the memorable night of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and of his betrayal into the hands of wicked men. They are words of deep and interesting meaning. All of his sayings are instructive, for no idle word ever passed his lips. But on an occasion like the present, when his life was about to be taken away; when the toils and pains of more than thirty years were about to be consummated on the cross; when he was about to *finish the work* which he came into the world expressly to perform, we may well expect a deeper import, and a fuller meaning in all he said.

When the supper was ended, our Lord arose, took a towel, girded himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet. He came first, probably, to Simon Peter; but the impetuous disciple, astonished at this act of condescension, wished to prevent what he considered too great a degradation of his Master. *Lord, dost thou wash my feet?* Our Lord quietly said, *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter;* but this did not satisfy Peter, and he hastily replied, *Thou shalt never wash my feet.* These words brought from our Lord a more decided declaration. *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me,* and the opposition of Peter was quelled at once.

I do not purpose at present to dwell on the import of Christ's action, in washing the disciples' feet. It is full of delightful meaning, and will amply repay the Christian for all the time he spends in studying it. Let us consider the meaning of the words, *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

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The sayings of our Lord, are like axioms in mathematics, or general truths in the other sciences. They have a force and meaning, not confined to the occasions when they were first announced, and when we carefully consider them, they often surprise us by the extensive and various applications of which they are susceptible.

The declaration before us, is one little flattering to our self-love and vanity. It proclaims our ignorance, and incompetence to judge even of things that pass before our eyes, and in which we are personally interested; and yet it is also one full of consolation and of glorious hope. It tells us, that, though ignorant now, we shall not be always ignorant; for the time is coming when things hidden shall be revealed, and things that are dark shall be made plain. The words are to be understood as one of the general truths of God's government—to wit, that at present we know neither the things that God is doing, the reasons for which he does them, nor the mode in which he effects his purposes. They tell us that we are now in a state of pupilage, in which, though some things are made known unto us, yet the full disclosure of all things is reserved till a future time.

Much may be known of God even here. Much is revealed to us now, and we find abundant cause to adore his wisdom which shines around us. But even when we know most of his dealings and his ways, how little do we know. Enough we know, to be satisfied that he doeth all things well: but not enough, either to understand fully his plans and schemes, or to satisfy the curiosity that rises in the breast. After the fullest disclosures, we are obliged to join with the patriarch who said, *Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him! but the thunder of his power who can understand!* Job xxvi. 14. The truth of this is soon evident when we consider any of the particulars in which his works are seen.

I. It is true that we know not now what our Lord is doing, *in his general government of all.*

Our Saviour is a great King. *All power in heaven and earth is given unto him*, Matt. xxviii. 18. *He is constituted head over all things to the church*, Eph. i. 22. He is in his own right, Ruler of all, and *God over all, blessed forever*, Rom. ix. 5. He governs the nations of the earth; some with the sceptre of his love, and some with a rod of iron. But his dominion is not confined to this world. Even when abased on earth, the unclean spirits ac-

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knowledged that he had power over them, and could command them *into the deep;* and now when exalted on his mediatorial throne, all worlds are subject to his control. Heaven bows at his footstool in willing subjection. Hell yields a constrained obedience, his hand is stretched out over the earth, and it is the footstool on which his power is displayed. How vast are his dominions! How numerous are his subjects! What wisdom is required to direct the affairs of this mighty empire! For it must be observed, that all the parts of this empire are bound together, and one system of government must pervade the whole. Remotest influences are brought to bear upon each several part. Messengers daily pass and repass from the upper sanctuary to this lower world. Angels are sent to minister to the saints on earth, or check the evils caused by fallen spirits from beneath. The conversion of one sinner here, sends pulsations of joy throughout the hosts around the throne, Luke xv. 10.

God has a plan for the government of this wide-spread kingdom. To deny him a plan and system of administration, would be to make him inferior to the governors of the earth, for with us, every wise ruler uses foresight in his administration; and the larger the sphere of his jurisdiction, the more comprehensive are his plans, and the more carefully does he seek to anticipate the future, that nothing may take him by surprise. The attention of the statesman is turned to everything that may influence the happiness of the people, and he is the most esteemed who best understands, and most carefully provides for the wants of all. How vast must be the plans of our Creator! How comprehensive must be that system that embraces all the interests of all his dominions, and which not only attends to the present wants, but foresees the future condition of each one of those dependent on his bounty. No sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge; *the young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God,* and of the great and wide sea, in which there go *things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts,* it is said, *These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season,* Ps civ. 21–27. The elements are all under his control, *Fire and hail, snow and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his words,* Ps. cxlviii. 8. The planetary worlds move in obedience to his command. The sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, that his wrath might be executed upon the devoted Canaanites, Josh. x. 13: yea, *They fought from heaven; the stars in their*

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course, fought against Sisera; that his people might be delivered from those that oppressed them, Judges v. 20.

A system so vast and complicated, is not developed in a moment. Ages roll away, and God's plan for the government of the universe is gradually unfolded. *One generation passeth away and another generation cometh*, Ecc. i. 4. Revolutions change the face of society. Empires rise and fall, *the face of the earth is renewed*, Ps. civ. 31, but his plan goes on in its slow and stately march, to its appointed consummation.

Contemplate, then, this mighty scheme. Behold its vast extent, and ask yourselves, "Is it strange that God says to us, while he directs these various operations, *What I do, thou knowest not now?*" How can we know, how can we comprehend the whole, when the parts are so far removed? We are like spectators of some vast procession, of which we catch a glimpse as it winds around the projecting side of a hill; but its commencement and its termination are alike unseen; or rather, we are a part of that procession, moving on in our appointed station with the rest; and though we may occasionally turn and contemplate the part nearest to ourselves, we cannot see the whole. Detached parts present themselves, we see a little here, and a little there, but the rest is hidden from our sight. What wonder, if in beholding these apparently unconnected fragments, we find ourselves unable to combine them into one great whole? What wonder, if we cannot trace the intentions of Him who *declareth the end from the beginning*, Is. xlvi. 10.

Suppose a child, or a peasant were asked to consider all the schemes of a statesman, could he comprehend them? Much study and experience, and close application of the mind are needed to understand all the affairs of a single nation, for a single age. How much more when the subject for consideration is the empire of the Most High, *whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation*, Dan. iv. 34. Behold, *This cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*, Is. xxviii. 29. Therefore, it is no matter of surprise, if when we contemplate God's general government, we are obliged to confess our inability to understand it all. He says to us, *What I do thou knowest not now.*

II. It is also true that we know not what God does in those things which more *particularly concern the welfare of his church on earth.*

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The general government of God, of which we have first spoken, includes his administration of the affairs of the church. Indeed, though men are slow to believe it, his general government of all, has special and primary reference to the interests of his own people. For in ancient times, *When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel*, Deut. xxxii. 8, and now, by his appointment, *all things work together for good to them that love God*, Rom. viii. 28. Yet although this item is included in that of which we have just spoken, it is well to make it a matter of separate consideration.

The church of God is the object of his peculiar love and care. The tenderest and the strongest terms are used in the Scriptures to denote his affection for it, and actions stronger than any words, prove that his love is stronger than death itself. *God spared not his own Son but freely gave him up for us all*, Rom. viii. 32. *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it*, Eph. v. 25. Therefore we naturally expect that in all God's dealings with his church he should show his love to it. So he does; but we expect him not only to show his love, but to exercise it in ways that shall correspond with our views, and meet our wishes. So he does not. His ways are not as our ways. He has modes of showing his love to his people that are strange to us, and often for the time full of mystery.

Ever since the fall of Adam, God has had a church on earth; and shall have till the end of time. The gates of hell shall never prevail against Zion. This church has been constantly the *apple of his eye;* and yet how varied have been its outward states. From small beginnings, it has risen and increased; and when apparently in the height of its prosperity some unknown cause has affected it, and it has diminished, and become weak. It has sunk down, and for a time become almost invisible. Again it has risen and shone with renewed splendor only to fall into still lower depths. Persecutions and afflictions from without have oppressed the church. Dissensions within have torn her. God's own hand has been upon her. *He has led her into the wilderness*, Hos. ii. 14. *He has caused her to pass under the rod*, Ezek. xx. 37. He has chastised and afflicted her, in wonderful ways, until as in the case of the ancient Jews, she has been a by-word and a proverb, among the nations; and men have asked in astonishment, *Is this Jerusalem, the beloved of Jehovah? Is this she that*

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was called the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth? Lam. ii. 15. What hath the Lord done? and the only answer that could be given, was contained in the words of our Lord, *What I do thou knowest not now.* He directed all the strokes that fell so heavily upon her, and he also raised up deliverers when all hope in man had failed. When the Israelites were oppressed by their enemies, and cried unto the Lord, he raised up judges which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them, Judges ii. 16; and oftentimes these judges were the men most unlikely to be chosen, and used instruments that offered no human probability of success. At one time, Ehud, a left-handed man; at another, Jael with a tent-hammer and nail; then Gideon and his three hundred with lamps and pitchers; Shamgar with an ox-goad; and Samson with the jaw-bone of an ass; such were the instruments with which God wrought deliverance for Israel. When Sennacherib with his mighty host came to overwhelm the pious Hezekiah, an angel of the Lord was sent forth, who slew in one night all the flower of his army. When the Jews were dispersed among the nations, God turned the heart of the Pagan monarch Cyrus, to send them back to their own land. Especially great was *the mystery of godliness*, when the Son of God, even God himself, *was manifest in the flesh.* In vain did he proclaim to his disciples the great work he came to do, and the great sacrifice he came to offer. It was too high and too mysterious for their comprehension. What he did they knew not then. *They understood not his saying; and it was hid from them that they perceived it not*, Luke ix. 45. *They understood none of these things*, Luke xviii. 34. *These things understood not the disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they*, John xii. 16. It was not till Christ had *opened their understandings* that they understood his work. It was not until the Comforter came, whom he had promised, that he should teach them all things, John xiv. 26, that they comprehended that which he did.

The history of the church in the ages since the advent of our Lord, had we time to consider it now, would afford us equally clear and striking evidences, that in the Lord's dealings with her, what he does we know not now. The aspect of the church in our own days affords sufficient proof. Who can foresee the end of some of the controversies that now disturb the peace of the church? Who shall tell us how great shall be the result of the system of modern missions to the heathen which distinguishes the present from the

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ages that have preceded it? The prophecies and the providence of God alike teach us that an important crisis in the history of the church is close at hand; but who knows what God is doing, or what the end of these things shall be?

Closely connected with this subject of our ignorance of what God is doing in the church is another—our ignorance of the meaning of many parts of the Scriptures. The word of God contains a perfect record of all his plan of governing his church. The reasons of his actions are laid down there, and the laws of his kingdom; and were our minds more capacious, our faculties more enlarged, we should find little difficulty in understanding them. But, as we are now, we are obliged to wait oftentimes till the event has taught us the full meaning of the prophecy; till the actual completion of his plan has taught us to comprehend the record which announces the plan. It is not strange, therefore, that *some things are hard to be understood* in the Scriptures, nor should men complain if they find mysteries in the eternal archives. You acquire knowledge gradually, in other sciences, and will you become perfect theologians at once? You read the book of nature which is spread out before your eyes, and by slow degrees comprehend a little of its contents; and is it strange that the book of Revelation which speaks of more wonderful things, should require equally long and careful study?

III. It may be remarked, thirdly, that the modes in which God accomplishes his works, are to us as strange and incomprehensible as the works themselves. He sees the end from the beginning, and adapts the means to his purposes. Possessing almighty power, he uses the most unlikely means to accomplish his will. *He maketh even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof he restrains*, Ps. lxxvi. 10. He uses unconscious agents—many even unwilling instruments—to execute his pleasure. The proud Assyrian who boasted of his prowess and of his might, of the strength of his hand, and of his prudence, was but the instrument of God to execute wrath against a sinful and hypocritical nation, Is. x. We may not be able to see the connection between the means employed and the result intended—but God has joined them indissolubly together. He uses thunder-storms to purify the physical atmosphere of the earth; and revolutions to purge away the impurities of the social and moral systems of men. While the storm is raging we may not see how it shall end in greater peace; but after the tempest he giveth tranquillity,

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and though we know not now how he worketh, we shall know hereafter.

It is God's ordinary course to conceal his workings. He dwells in the thick darkness. He has his way in the deep waters: *He hath his way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet*, Nah. i. 3. Or if at any time clouds and darkness do not surround his throne, it is because he then dwelleth in light, which is to us equally inaccessible, being too full of glory for the gaze of our feeble eyes, and from the throne, the voice still comes to our ears, *What I do, thou knowest not now.*

IV. In God's *providential dealings with particular persons*, there is often much that seems strange. On no point are men so much at a loss, as in regard to the unequal distribution of good and evil to good and bad men; and because what God does, cannot be made to agree with the preconceived opinions of men, there are many who totally deny his providential government and interposition. Certain it is that afflictions come where man would not send them; that honor and riches are bestowed where man would have withheld them. Holy Job, a man perfect and upright, and kind to all, was deprived of property, children, and health. Covered with sores he sat upon a dunghill, and became the object of scorn, to those whose fathers he would have disdained to set with the dogs of his flock, Job xxx. 1. On the other hand, the wicked walk on every side and the vilest men are exalted. They live, become old, yea, are mighty in power, they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave, Job xxi. 7–13, without experiencing the pains of lingering sickness or wasting disease. These are not merely the records of other times, they are what you and I have seen in our own days. Have we not seen God send repeated afflictions on those of whom no man could say, "they are worse than others?" Have we not seen his waves and his billows go over the heads of those that trusted in him? Have we not seen the delicate female who had left her father's house for the sake of the perishing heathen, and endured privations for a course of years, to which in her own land she would not have been subjected, prostrated with frequent sickness in the land of her sojourning? Have we not seen her taken away from the bosom of her husband, and the children she bare him, when they most needed her care? Have we not seen those apparently best qualified to carry on God's work, and build up Christ's kingdom, cut down at the very moment when their services seemed

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most indispensable? Who of us has not felt as we stood by the opened graves of our friends who have recently fallen, or joined in the funeral processions of such men as Dyer and Morrison, that a voice from heaven was saying to us, *What I do thou knowest not now.*

And in God's favorable dealings with his own people, it is emphatically true, that they know not what he does. We are too apt to confine our views to the present. We are too apt to think that when we have received a token of his favor, that our portion is given us, and to rejoice in it. But this is only the seed-time. It is not the harvest. These merciful dispensations are not the portion of his people. Is he now bestowing blessings upon your souls? They are only the earnests of what he will hereafter bestow. Has he begun to receive you into favor, and to show his love? It is but the beginning, the end is not yet. You have not seen all that he can and will do for you. You shall see things greater than these—yea so much greater, that all your present experience of his love can give you but low and faint ideas of them; *As it is written, eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Yes, fellow Christian! What God is doing for you, you know not now. All your afflictions and all your joys—your hours of trial and your seasons of repose—they are working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Now, you may not understand them, but hereafter you shall. For it is to be carefully observed, that this state of ignorance shall not last forever. *What I do, says Christ, Thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* Even in this life we shall know much. The book of God's word, and the book of God's providence are spread out before us; and by a careful study of them, joined to earnest prayer for the divine illumination, we shall, even in this state of pupilage, make large advances in heavenly knowledge. Many of the mysteries in God's general government of the world, and in his dealings with his church, shall become plain to us; and especially shall the dark parts in our own history become more legible. So often is this the case, that the experience of all of God's children leads them to say, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* And there is a promise left to those who will apply to the study of these things, for, *Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord*, Ps. cvii. 43.

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But though even in this life, we may learn much of what God is doing, we cannot learn all. The scene is too vast to be surveyed from any elevation this world affords—the prospect is too extended to be accurately beheld by eyes so feeble as ours now are. *Thou shalt know hereafter,* but it shall be in the other world, and this consideration is both a matter of hope to the Christian, and a solemn warning to the impenitent.

One of the most delightful of the occupations of heaven will be to trace the dealings of God with our world. Then, the map of his providence shall be spread out before the Christian, and every defect being removed from his vision, he shall see clearly what now is seen but in part. The ways of God to man shall then be fully justified. Nor shall a doubt remain, but that *He hath done all things well.* Even those things which are now obscure, shall be seen to have been ordered in the highest wisdom, and the believer shall be astonished to see how God was leading him along, guarding him from dangers and supplying every want, when he thought himself utterly desolate and forsaken. *Now he leadeth the blind in a way they know not,* Is. xlii. 16, but then they shall confess that the way of infinite wisdom, though ofttimes veiled in clouds and darkness, was by far the best that could have been chosen, *Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known,* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. As it has been well expressed by the Christian poet,

> "Then shall I see and feel I know,
> All I desired or wished below,
> And every power find sweet employ
> In that eternal world of joy."

But to the impenitent and unbelieving, this aspect of the subject is one for solemn consideration. In heaven there shall be full knowledge of all of God's doings, and this shall be a source of joy unspeakable—but in the world of woe, all knowledge shall be an aggravation of the miseries of the lost. Now, men make it an excuse that they cannot understand what God is doing, that some things are too obscure, some are almost absurd, some unjust. But in the other world, all these excuses will be shown to be futile. *Thou shalt know hereafter,* that the Judge of all the earth doeth right. *Thou shalt know hereafter,* there was nothing in all he did to give occasion to these captious cavillings. *Thou shalt know hereafter,* the glories of that world to which he invites our race, the full salvation offered to all, and that the fault is not with

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God, but with man, that any of our race are finally excluded from the paradise of God. *Thou shalt know hereafter*—but God grant, that none of us may know by our own experience, *the terrors of the Lord*, and the miseries of those, who, for their own sins, have been thrust down to hell!

The length of the remarks already made prevents me from adding more than these three short practical reflections:—

1. Learn patience and submission to God's will. Take it for granted that though you understand not all he says and does, yet he is wise and good in all. Be not surprised that you cannot understand all his dealings with you now; and wait till the time he is pleased to explain them.

2. Study carefully the dealings of God with man, and pray for the illumination of the Spirit. Thus shall you understand somewhat of the ways of God.

3. Repose confidence in God. There is no other in whom you can confide. He has already shown you, that even when you knew not what he did, you had abundant reason to say, he did it well. His character is such that even though he *hide himself*, he cannot do iniquity. Therefore say like the patriarch Job, *Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.* Thus acting you shall understand the meaning of the Saviour's words, *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

MACAO, Dec. 1, 1844.

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SERMON XXXV.

INVITATION TO COME UNTO CHRIST.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.—JOHN vii. 37.

THE Jews had three great feasts in every year. The *passover* was held in the first month of the *sacred* year, in commemoration of the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt. The *feast of weeks* was held seven weeks after the passover, and was commonly called from that circumstance, the Pentecost, or fiftieth day. It was observed as a time of thanksgiving for the law given fifty days after they left Egypt. The *feast of tabernacles* was held in the seventh month of the sacred year, which was the last of the civil year; hence it is sometimes called the feast *in the end of the year*, Exod. xxiii. 16. The special object of this feast was to remember the goodness of God to their forefathers, while they dwelt in tabernacles in the wilderness, in memory of which the Jews were commanded to pass the seven days of the feast in booths. It was also intended as a feast of thanksgiving for the fruits of the ground which were then all safely gathered in, and stored away for the winter. On this account it was sometimes called, *the feast of ingathering*, Exod. xxiii. 14.

In each of these feasts all the males in the land were required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem; and the numbers that were often collected there almost surpass belief. It is recorded by Josephus that several millions of people were assembled at Jerusalem at some of these feasts.

Although the passover was probably the most solemn of all the feasts of the Jews, yet none seems to have been more carefully observed than the feast of tabernacles, concerning which mention is made in the text. It was a time of gratitude for all the goodness of God to their fathers in the wilderness, and of praise for all the mercies they had received from him during the

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year then closing. It was the general thanksgiving day of the nation, a time of gladness, and of sending of portions one to another. It was concerning this feast, that the Lord said, *Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou and thy son and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose; because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands; therefore thou shalt surely rejoice*, Deut. xvi. 14, 15.

The last day of the feast of tabernacles was the *great day of the feast.* It was the last of all the feast days of the year—it was the closing act of praise to God for unnumbered mercies. It is probable also that the sacrifices and services of that day had peculiar reference to their expected Saviour. The sacrifices were not so numerous on that day as on the preceding days. On the first day thirteen bullocks were offered in sacrifices; on the second twelve, on the third eleven, and thus down to the seventh, on which seven were offered, and on the eighth only one. By this it might have been intended to signify that the multiplied sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic-law must gradually give way and be abolished; while the one offering of Christ should perfect forever them that believe. If this were the intention, there was a peculiar propriety in calling it, the *great day of the feast.*

On this day the multitude in the temple was the greatest; from all parts of the land they came. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, were there, and they had *a solemn assembly*, according to the manner, Num. xxix. 35; Neh. viii. 18.

Our Saviour too was there. Curiosity was awake concerning him, for already his fame had spread far and near. He had not gone up to the feast at its commencement, and his absence had excited surprise, John vii. 11. But in the midst of the feast he came, went boldly up to the temple and taught. The people wondered, and crowded around to hear him; but the Pharisees were enraged and sent men to take him. *But his hour was not yet come*, and he continued unmoved and unharmed at his post. He was the theme of endless curiosity and remark.

Learned men tell us, that among the ceremonies of that day, one of the most imposing and interesting was, the pouring out of water before the altar of the Lord. The priests went down in their priestly robes, and drew water from the fountain of Siloam

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in a golden vessel, and as they poured it out at the foot of the altar, the multitude waved their palm-branches and sang the song of Isaiah, *Behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*, Is. xii. 2, 3.

It would seem that it was about the time of the performance of this interesting ceremony that our Saviour uttered the words of our text. He took his stand in a conspicuous place in the temple, and lifting up his voice, he cried, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

The blessings of salvation are often compared to streams of water, and those who need and desire salvation, are said to thirst after these streams. This is a favorite comparison of our Saviour's. and if we divest the expression of its figurative dress, his meaning in the passage before us is, that he is able, willing and ready to bestow salvation upon every one who will apply to him for it. Let us consider,

I. To whom the invitation is addressed. *If any man thirst.* There is no exception or limitation here. Christ did not stand in a corner, or speak in a whisper, when he uttered these words. He did not speak to one more than to another, but he lifted up his voice so that all might hear. The multitude were there. They saw the sparkling waters of Siloam, as they were poured out at the foot of the altar, and rolled along the marble floor of the temple court. They thought of the streams from the rock which had supplied their fathers in the desert, and of the early and the latter rain, in their own favored land, which had filled their brooks, and caused their springs to overflow. For these they had given thanks, and Christ now calls their attention to the still greater blessings, even the *living waters* he had to bestow. Their minds were too apt to be satisfied with the water they then possessed, and to desire nothing better than the streams of the earthly Canaan. Like the woman of Samaria, when the Son of God spoke to her of *living water*, she thought but of water to quench her bodily thirst. But Christ's wish was to turn their minds to higher than mere earthly blessings. If any man drank of this water, he must thirst again, aye, and die too; for their fathers who had eaten the manna, and drank the water from the rock in the desert, were all dead; but Christ had that to bestow,

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which should be *in them a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14.

If any man thirst. It matters not who. Be he high or low, be he rich or poor, the only qualification Christ requires, is that he be thirsty; that he desire a blessing. Doubtless our Saviour had in mind, that precious invitation in Isaiah, *Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price*, Is. lv. 1.

This invitation is a public and a loud one. *Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors; unto you, oh men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men*, Prov. viii. 1–4; see i. 20, 21; ix. 1–4. It is made in every variety of form, if so be men will hear it. *The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*, Rev. xxii. 17.

It is an *earnest* call. God forbid we should think he maketh any call not sincerely. He describes himself after the manner of men, as *rising up early and sending* his prophets and messengers, Jer. xxv. 4. He sends them everywhere to proclaim his message, telling them to go even to the highways and hedges, and to use so much earnestness with men as even *to compel them to come in*, Luke xiv. 23.

He hath enough for all. The fountain Christ has opened, is not like the fountains we see on earth, where only a few can be supplied at once, while others must stand and wait, or even return empty away. Were the whole world to come, here flows enough to satisfy them all. Were all nations to crowd around at once, still we should say, *And yet there is room.* The merits of Christ are unspeakable; the salvation he procured is an infinite salvation. Therefore, *let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption*, Ps. cxxx. 7.

Were Jesus Christ a man like ourselves, his righteousness could not profit us. He would need it all for himself. But he is not a man as we are. The union of the Godhead with his manhood, gave his person an infinite dignity, and his sufferings an infinite value. This whole world is lost, yet no other sacrifice is needed to atone for every sin, and procure eternal life for all. *By one offering, he perfects forever them that are sanctified*, Heb. x. 14.

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The offer of Christ in the text is a universal offer. *If any man thirst, let him come.*

The sensation of thirst, is one that every person must have experienced. It has different degrees of intensity, and always produces a desire for that which shall allay it. When we are long deprived of water, the sensation becomes one of the most painful we ever feel. Even hunger is not so tormenting. Every power of the body fails, the strength is exhausted, the eyes become dim, the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth, and unless the thirst be quenched, death soon comes. When suffering from long-continued and excessive thirst, there is no sacrifice we would not make to quench it. Kingdoms have been sold for a draught from the cooling stream. True, such painful thirst is not often felt, but thirst in any degree is unpleasant, and excites the desire for something to satisfy the want that is felt.

And who has not felt this thirst, in spiritual things? Who, that has been born in a Christian land, does not feel that he is naturally *in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is?* Ps. lxiii. 1. Who, that has thought at all of his own condition, does not know that he is naturally far from God, the fountain of righteousness, and all true delights? Who does not feel that he needs something which he has not naturally, ere he can satisfy all the desires of his soul, and his aspirations after blessedness? Who does not make frequent efforts to satisfy these desires? Some, nay, most men seek, and for the time satisfy themselves by seeking, in mere outward forms and external services, that which shall quiet the thoughts of a future life, which arise in their hearts; and many there be, who, by such means, succeed in repressing the uneasy emotions of conscience.

To all such is the invitation of Christ addressed, though, alas! they seldom hear it. You are thirsty—you desire eternal life—you would avoid the wrath of God, and though for the present your thirst is somewhat quenched, it is not satisfied. To you is the word of this salvation sent. To you I repeat the words of Christ, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* You have been told of your need, and your conscience responds to the truth of what has been said. What excuse now can you make, for not accepting of the invitation? A fountain is opened, streaming abundantly, and you are urged to come and partake. Turn not aside from these cool, flowing streams—from this exhaustless fountain. Seek not to quench your thirst at other

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streams, for, though you may succeed for a moment, it will but aggravate your pains in the end.

But there are some who feel this thirst more sensibly. There are some who have more deeply considered their own condition, and felt their own wants. There are some who are sensible that they are in a dry and thirsty land; who have gone to every fountain opened by men, or of their own discovery, and have returned unsatisfied; and who are convinced that, unless they obtain the water of everlasting life, they must perish forever. Like the stricken deer, wounded and pursued by the hunters, that longs for the cooling brooks, they are fleeing from the wrath of God, which seems armed against them, and earnestly desire to find the shelter and the refreshment of the protected spring. They are such as have seen that, except in God's mercy, there is no shelter from God's wrath; and with the Psalmist, their cry is, *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God*, Ps. xlii. 12. This desire after God and his salvation, is one that excites to action, and to efforts to obtain it. The thirsty man does not satisfy himself with mere desires for water, he uses every exertion to obtain it, convinced that he must obtain it or die. Thus, too, acts the man who feels this spiritual thirst. His language is again the language of the Psalmist, *O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary*, Ps. lxiii. 12. Early and late does he seek God, if so be he may be gracious to him. With earnest prayer does he call upon him, if he may thereby obtain the blessing he desires. *I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land*, Ps. cxliii. 6.

Is there any one here present that thus thirsts after God? Do you feel your need, and long to have it supplied? Do you lift up your hands with prayer to God? Then to you is the invitation of Christ addressed. Do not make excuses. Do not say, "I do not feel thirsty enough, I am not fit to come. My desires are not strong enough." There are different degrees of thirst, but who thinks of waiting till he is perishing, before he drinks? There are different degrees of intensity of desire after salvation, but Christ has nowhere said how strong those desires must be. Do you desire at all? That is sufficient. Are you

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thirsty at all? Then hear the invitation, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;* for it is Christ himself who says, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

Let us consider,

II. THE INVITATION ITSELF.

Come unto me, and drink. You have been desirous of happiness, and have long been seeking it. Your soul has thirsted, and you have endeavored to quench that thirst, but where have you sought to do so? It may be in yourselves, but the vainest of mortals must confess, that alone he is not sufficient for his own happiness. You have sought it, perhaps, in the society of friends, and the delights of the domestic circle. Far be it from me to speak disparagingly of these. Well do I know that there are no sweeter earthly enjoyments than those of family and friends—but who knows not that few are so uncertain? Who knows not, by painful experience, that the friend we love most, may be the first that is taken from us? Who knows not the anxieties connected with those that remain? You have sought for happiness in literary pursuits, in the arena of political contest, among the quicksands of mercantile business. It may be you have gone lower down, and sought for it among baser pursuits and sensual gratifications. Have you found the object of your search? And are you satisfied now? Does no longing desire arise in your bosoms, which you feel cannot be gratified by such enjoyments as these? Alas! they are but broken cisterns at best. In vain will you attempt to satiate an immortal soul with such feeble, transient, summer-like brooks as these. The streams are impure and small at best, and though you drink even to repletion, yet you thirst again. Search creation round, and if you are honest with your own hearts, you will say with the disciples at last, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,* John vi. 68.

Come therefore unto Christ. Come out of yourselves. Renounce utterly all dependence on your own merits and righteousness, even as the apostle Paul did, (Phil. iii.) Come away from the vanities of the world. Cease to expect pleasure from the sparkling fountains that murmur and play around you. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot enjoy the pleasures of this world, and the sense of God's favor. If the cross of Christ be borne at all, it must be borne alone. And why should any man wish to combine the service of God with that of the world? Is the service of the world so pleasant, and its rewards

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so rich, that we should covet them, when we have applied for a place among the followers of Christ? Is not his service and the rewards he offers sufficient to satisfy every desire?

He can supply all your wants, and he has promised to do it. Hear him saying in Isaiah, *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water,* Is. xli. 17, 18. And again he says, *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring,* Is. xliv. 3.

It need scarcely be said, that under this comparison of water, all the blessings of Christ's salvation are intended, and of those blessings, the chief is the pardon of sin, which we obtain through the sacrifice of Christ, and the shedding of his blood for sin. It was in reference to this sacrifice, and its effects in procuring the pardon of sin, that Christ said, *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,* John v. 54–58. Another, and equally important blessing, intended by our Saviour, was the gift of the Holy Spirit, to quicken our souls, to strengthen us in duty, to sanctify our natures, and prepare us for heaven; and it was this gift of the Spirit that he had in mind chiefly when he uttered the words of the text; for in the next verse it is said, *This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive.*

These blessings, the pardon of sin, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, are those which of all others we most need, and for which the convinced sinner and the established Christian chiefly long, and these we obtain only from Christ. How much are we bound to give thanks to God, that the fountain which was once opened only to the Jews, is now made accessible to all nations, and that we Gentiles are invited to come and partake with them. The Gentiles now come from the ends of the earth—for the call is to every one that thirsteth—and all who come are made alike welcome.

And as this invitation is universal, so it is free. You need bring no price in your hands. The fountain is flowing, and you have but to come and to ask; for he who calls you to come, says also, *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely,* Rev. xxi. 6.

Are there any here present, who thirst for living streams, but

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have not yet obtained? Your case is one of peculiar interest, and of peculiar danger. You desire life, and be assured your desire must be satisfied in some way. But the danger is, that the great adversary of souls, aware of your desire, and fearful lest you should escape his grasp, should tempt you to drink of the fountains he himself has opened, and forget him who alone can supply your need. Beware lest in an evil hour you consent to his allurements, and satisfy yourselves with anything less than, or other than Christ. A greater sin you cannot commit, nor one more likely to incur the just displeasure of the compassionate Saviour. *Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forgotten?* Jer. xviii. 14. You feel your need—come to the fountain opened, *while it is opened*, and grieve not the Spirit, and the Saviour who sends the Spirit, by longer delay. Be assured of a hearty welcome when you come, and if doubts or fears arise in your hearts, bring them to the Saviour, and plead his own promise, as the reason why you come. He will not cast you out, nor reject your plea. Fellow-Christian, you have already drank of this fountain, and know its sweetness. But you have need to come to it constantly, and the oftener you come, the more you shall delight in it. Apply to the Saviour daily, and he will give you the water of life, which shall refresh you in your pilgrimage through this weary, thirsty land. Be satisfied with this alone, and daily desire larger measures of it. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled*, Matt. v. 6.

But beware that you seek not to satisfy your desires at any other fountain. To whom can you go but to the Saviour? It was a sore complaint that God made of his ancient people, *My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*, Jer. ii. 13. To say nothing of the evil of this course, of seeking for happiness in any but in God alone (though that should affect you deeply), it is one most destructive to all your own peace and happiness. If you are God's children, he will not suffer you to find happiness, except in himself alone. He is jealous for his own honor and prerogatives, and you shall glorify him most, and consult your own good most, by coming to him, *constantly and alone.*

Macao, December 15, 1844.

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SERMON XXXVI.

UNWILLINGNESS TO COME UNTO CHRIST.

Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.—JOHN v. 40.

THE invitations of the gospel are numerous, loud, earnest, and tender. All men without exception, are invited to come unto the Saviour, and obtain eternal life, and it cannot be supposed that these invitations are not sincere on God's part. Warnings and reproofs are directed against those who will not come, and everything in the Scriptures tends to show us, *that life and death, blessing and cursing,* are set before us, that we may choose life, and live forever, Deut. xxx. 19.

And yet, in all ages of the world, the mass of mankind have heard the offers of life, and passed them by in silent neglect, or open contempt. When our Lord appeared in person on the earth, though many believed on him, the mass of the nation rejected him. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not,* John i. 11. His apostles had great success, and by their preaching, great multitudes became convinced of the truth and were saved. And yet, in every place, those who hardened themselves, and refused to believe, were more than those who received the truth. So it has been down to the present time. There is not a nation in the Old World, from the shores of Africa that border on the Atlantic ocean, to the extremities of the Chinese empire, that has not heard the gospel, and yet how few of the nations are Christian nations. And even among the nations of Christendom—among those who profess to worship the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent—how few comparatively can be said to worship him in truth. Who knows not that in every Christian land there are thousands upon thousands, who are ignorant of God? Who knows not the wickedness that prevails in Christian lands, of which the heathen cannot be guilty, seeing they have not so much light to sin against?

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Why is it, that among nominal Christians, who hear and profess to believe the gospel, there are so few that really deserve the Christian name? Men hear the invitations of the gospel. They acknowledge the folly of living in sin; the dreadful end that awaits those who thus live; they acknowledge the duty and the reasonableness of God's service, and the excellence of the rewards he offers. Why are there so few that embrace that service, and have respect unto that recompense of reward?

Various excuses are given by men, for neglecting religion. It is not possible to see the truth so clearly as even our natural reason shows it, and act contrary thereto without some twinges of self-condemnation, and a seeking for some excuse to palliate the crime. It was the object of some of our Saviour's parables to show the folly of the common excuses, Luke xiv. 16.

Our Saviour *knew what was in man*, John iii. 24. He could see every secret emotion of the heart, and could tell precisely why men did not come to him for life. In the words of the text he has by one single sentence flashed light upon the true reason. *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* Or as it might have been more literally rendered, *Ye do not wish; ye are unwilling to come* [ουθελετε]. He says to every man who does not come unto him, and engage heartily in his service, "Whatever the reasons, you offer for not coming, the true reason is in yourselves." It is not in God's eternal decrees, of which as respects yourself, you know nothing. It is not in the salvation procured by Christ's death, which is sufficient for all; nor in the offers of mercy, which are free to all. It is not in the weakness or unfitness of the instrument, who preaches to you and calls you to come. It is in yourselves, in your own unwillingness *ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

The doctrine of the text, therefore, is this. That the reason why men are not saved, is solely because they are opposed to the truth and do not wish to be saved by Christ. It follows as a necessary consequence, that this opposition and unwillingness is highly criminal, and deserves the punishment that will certainly be inflicted on that account.

There are some who will deem it a very strange and almost absurd remark to say, "Men do not wish to be saved." Do not all men desire to escape the damnation of hell? Do not all men wish to be saved from the wrath to come? Yes, verily, but this is a very small part of Christ's salvation. Not only does he save

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from the wrath of God, but also from the sin that incurs that wrath. To be saved by Christ, implies not merely to be delivered from the punishment of sin, but from sin itself. "To be saved" means to be made holy, by mortifying every sin, by living a life of meekness, humility, self-denial, engagedness in God's service, communion with him, and conformity to his image. Without this total change of the whole heart and life, heaven itself would be little better than the regions of despair, Now it is not absurd to say, that if this is salvation, then men do not wish to be saved; and that men are opposed to the truth and unwilling to come to Christ to be thus saved, appears both from universal experience, and the explicit declarations of the Scriptures.

Look over the world, and where is the perfect man to be found? Where can we find one child of Adam who has never sinned, and does not daily sin? Whose conscience does not accuse him of numberless transgressions of God's law? The common proverbs of all nations show it. One of the commonest sayings, where the English language is spoken is, "We all have our faults"—and the most thoughtful are they who most readily admit its truth. I have conversed with an intelligent and educated Chinese, who had never read the Christian Scriptures, and though their own classical books proclaim the purity of man's nature, he admitted in the fullest manner, that he had never seen a man who did not daily sin, nor did he think there was such a man in the world.

How is this universal sinfulness of men and opposition to the truth to be accounted for, if men do not wilfully sin? Can it be supposed that God has made it necessary that we should sin? God forbid! The holiness of his character, and his utter abhorrence of all sin, render such a supposition impossible. Can it be supposed that God has given Satan power, or that he even permits him, to lead us to sin against our own consent? If we abhorred sin in our hearts, can it be conceived possible, that the great enemy of God and man, would be allowed to force us to commit it, and thus depart from God? Far be the thought from us! Would you who are parents suffer one of your children to be led away from you, and forced to do what is abhorred, while it held out its hands, and begged you to save it? How much less can we suppose that God who is kinder as well as more powerful than any earthly parent, would suffer Satan to lead one of his creatures captive at his own will, and contrary to the will

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of the creature? No, it is because men love sin that they commit it. It is because they roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongue, that Satan has power to tempt them to it. Salvation from sin is offered unto men. Why are men not saved from sin? Can it be thought that God would offer men salvation if he did not wish them to be saved, and was not sincere in his offers? Far be the thought from us. We take the offer on the part of God, as ample proof of his willingness and sincerity,—and with shame acknowledge that the only reason why men are not saved from sin, is that they do not wish to be saved from it. Because, if salvation from sin were possible, and the offer of salvation were made to all, then the simple fact that any were not saved, would show the reason to be, that they did not wish to be saved.

The offer of life and salvation was made to God's ancient people, in the fullest manner possible. They had seen all God's wonders in the wilderness, and his mighty acts and his long-suffering and tender mercy; and Moses had said to them, *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live,* Deut. xxx. 19. Did they choose life? Did they desire the blessing? Did they cleave to the Lord? Far from it. God complains of them, *My people would not hearken unto my voice, Israel would none of me,* Ps. lxxxi. 11. When Christ came to the world, he came to his own peculiar people. They had long been looking for and desiring his coming; and when John the Baptist came to prepare his way, they *all went out and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins,* Matt. iii. 5. They saw the miracles of Christ, and wondered at the purity of his life, and holiness of his doctrine. They beheld his compassion, and his love, and heard his invitations to come unto him; if weary and heavy-laden he besought them to come to him and obtain rest; if thirsty, to come to him and drink; if hungry, to come to him and eat. Did they come? Alas, no! and to describe their conduct, he spake a parable. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come,* Matt. xxii. 23, and when he sent again to call them, *they made light of it.* Some simply neglecting the call, and others treating with indignity, with scorn, and even with death, the messengers he sent. He was willing to save them, but they were not willing to be saved. *Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem,* said

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the compassionate Saviour, *thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not*, Matt. xxiii. 37.

The experience of our Saviour of the unwillingness of men to be saved, has been the experience of all his ministers in the world. *All day long we stretch forth our hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people;* and with the prophet of old, we must cry, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Is. liii. 1. What is the reason of this? It is given by our Lord in these words, *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*, John iii. 19. This is the true reason; the rejection of the gospel by men, is a wilful rejection. The heart is utterly averse to holiness. It loves sin, and because salvation by Christ is not to be procured without a renunciation of sin, and a constant effort after holiness, men will have nothing to do with it. Nay, even the adorable Saviour, with all his perfections, becomes an object of hatred because he *testifies of the world that its works are evil*, John vii. 7. True, men say, "We do not hate the Saviour—we love to think of his character." Yes, and who does not, as long as you contemplate him only while going about and doing good? Who does not admire that compassion, that meekness, that perfect blamelessness of life which he exhibited? Was there ever such a perfectly amiable character witnessed in the world? As long as men consider only the amiability of our Saviour and his good works, no feelings arise in the heart save those of admiration, and almost of love. But consider his character more closely; listen to him as he requires sinless perfection, and commands you to be holy as your Father in heaven is holy. Hear him requiring you to take up the cross and follow him; hear him requiring you to wear his yoke and be conformed to his image, to drink of the cup he drank, and be baptized with the baptism wherewith he was baptized, and are you as ready to admire and to love as before? But he requires more than empty admiration and love. It is his command that you come unto him, enroll yourselves on his side, and do his will, and he adds, *He that is not with me is against me, he that gathereth not for me scattereth abroad*, Matt. xii. 30. Alas, this is too hard a requirement for men, and hence our Saviour's declaration, *Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.*

But this unwillingness to come unto Christ is yet more deeply

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rooted and obstinate than it at first appears. It amounts to actual enmity against God and his salvation. What saith the apostle? *The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*, Rom. viii. 7. True, men demur to this. They say, "Although we may not be engaged in God's service, yet certainly we are not his enemies. We do not oppose him." But remember the words of Christ, *He that is not with me is against me.* There is no middle course. The service of Satan, or the service of God. You cannot combine the two, and if you are not on God's side, you are against him. Doth not the apostle say, *The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*, James iv. 4. Ye cannot serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon, and the practical choice of the world, which most men make, is in fact a declaration of hostility against God. It is a renunciation of his lawful authority, a positive preference for that which he abhors, an overt act of treason against the Creator. He has sent his own Son to offer pardon and invite your return, and what is his reception? A civil hearing of his message, a decorous attention to the words of his ministers, perhaps an avoidance of the grosser acts of opposition to him, but still a pertinacious adherence to the world. And this unwillingness to turn to God—this disinclination to accept of Christ's salvation—this preference for the world—is so strong that it amounts to an absolute inability to turn to God, and is so represented in the Scriptures. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil*, Jer. xiii. 23.

It is this settled preference for the world, and opposition to God's service, which prevents men from coming to Christ, and indeed makes it impossible that they should. Hence our Saviour said, *No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him*, John vi. 44.

But is this inability any excuse? Dare any man plead the fact that he dislikes God's service so much, and prefers that of the world so strongly, that he cannot choose to be on the Lord's side, as any excuse for his conduct? It is rather an aggravation of the crime, and would be so considered in any court of justice on the earth. For example. It is related of Joseph's brethren, that when they saw the favor their father bare him *they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him*, Gen. xxxvii. 4. Was their inability to speak peaceably to their brother any excuse? Did it

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not rather involve them in deeper criminality? Even so our worldliness of heart, our opposition to the gospel, our unwillingness to come to Christ, our inability to engage in his service, all spring from the carnal mind which is enmity against God, and on that very account deserves the deeper condemnation. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved*, John iii. 19, 20.

The words of our Saviour in the text were spoken to the unbelieving Jews, but they were not intended for them alone. They are spoken also to us, being left on record for our warning and instruction, and the truth they teach is as applicable in our days, as it was when Christ first spoke it. It is his own creatures whom he calls; men who have all along been rebels and sinful, and worthy of death, rather than life. He has long borne with their follies and crimes, and sent many messengers to entreat them to return unto him. At length he comes in his own person, to offer salvation. Clothed in every attractive grace, he presents himself as an object worthy of our supreme regard. He holds up eternal life and blessedness, and by every motive urges us to come and secure it. In order to remove every obstacle out of our road, and make our coming possible, he gives himself up to death, and is lifted up between heaven and earth, *that he may draw all men unto him*, John iii. 14. How are these offers received? how is this wonderful love and compassion regarded? Do men flock in crowds, repenting of the sin that made such a sacrifice needful, and joyfully accepting of the proffered boon? Far, far from it! Very strange indeed is the complaint we hear from the Saviour's lips, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* Every obstacle on God's part is removed. No flaming sword now guards the way to the tree of life. No fiery cherubim prevent us from plucking its fruits; a highway is prepared, and we are commanded to walk therein and be saved, and yet men are unwilling to come! Other excuses may be given, but this is the real reason, and for this we shall be judged.

1. What are we to think of such a rejection of the offers of mercy? How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? It was spoken to us at first by the Lord himself, it has been confirmed to us by innumerable witnesses and partakers, and conscience has added her voice, to swell the amount of evidence. Is

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not this unwillingness to come, a thing to be deeply abhorred and repented of? and should we not fear lest it draw down upon us God's heavy anger?

2. Let us also adore the grace and long-suffering of God, that bears so long with us, and still holds out the offers of mercy. Man would not so patiently wait. No earthly potentate would offer favors, after they had been so often rejected. But God's ways are not as man's ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Mercy still guides his hand, and grace is still poured into the lips of our compassionate Saviour; and in despite of all our unwillingness, he often saves men from their sins. How far-reaching is that grace, which, stooping from the eternal throne of God, and stretching beneath even the desperate wickedness and unwillingness of the human heart, raises any of our race to the fellowship of the saints in light, and the inheritance of the sons of God! Truly herein is one of the greatest mysteries of the gospel. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*, Ps. cx. 3. Without doing violence to our natures, the power and grace of God sweetly constrain men to renounce their opposition and come unto the Saviour; and nothing less than divine power can do it. How does the apostle heap up words to describe that power! He tells us that it is *the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead*, Eph. i. 19, 20.

Finally, let us learn hence, where our strength lieth, and what is our hope. We cannot, and we will not come unto Christ of ourselves, and in this inability and unwillingness lies our sin. Yet if we come not, we perish. Let us then prostrate ourselves before God, and plead the prayer of the church in the Song of Solomon, *Draw us, we will run after thee*, Cant. i. 4. The sense of our own sinfulness, helplessness, and need, should constrain us thus to come. The promises and the calls of Christ should cause us to hasten our escape, and the sight of so many that have thus been saved, should encourage your hearts with the hope of similar success. *Him that cometh unto me*, says our Saviour, *I will in no wise cast out*, John vi. 37.

MACAO, December 22, 1844.

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SERMON XXXVII.

OUR TIMES IN THE HAND OF GOD.

My times are in thy hand.—Ps. xxxi. 15.

THE life of David, the king of Israel, was long a most wandering, unsettled, and perilous one. Innocent of any crime, he was yet persecuted by envious and wicked men, and by the malice of Saul, was hunted *like a partridge in the mountains.* He was ofttimes in imminent danger of his life, so that he could justly say, *There is but a step between me and death.* Then for a little season, deliverance came, and again he was brought lower than ever. Many and varied were *the times that went over him*, 1 Chron. xxix. 30, for his life was marked by changes, perils, and deliverances, such as few men have known. This thirty-first Psalm contains the record of his feelings amidst the changing times of his life, and it is worthy of careful remark, how amidst all his changing times and varied troubles he puts his trust in God, and looks to him for shelter.

In thee, oh Lord, do I put my trust,
Thou art my rock and my fortress.
Into thy hand I commit my spirit,
I trusted in thee, oh Lord.

To him the doctrine of God's superintending, and all directing and controlling providence, was no empty notion. It was to him a living reality. He had seen God's hand stretched out for his defence. He had felt his everlasting arms beneath him for his support. It was his soul's desire and his heartfelt prayer, that he might ever repose under the shadow of the Almighty, and in so doing he experienced a peace and confidence which none of his enemies knew, and which were utter strangers to the bosom of the jealous Saul.

The words of the text, coming from such a man as he, are worthy of careful consideration, and especially so, when the

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change of times, and the revolution of years, turn our thoughts to the conditions of our mortal life. Since we last met in this place, one year has passed away, and another has come in its place. The times, and seasons, and events of our life are constantly changing, and as wise men, it is our duty to reflect upon them, and while time is given to us, so to use it as not abusing it. *My times are in thy hand.* By times, David doubtless meant all the events of his life, at whatever time they had occurred, or might occur, and by saying his times were in God's hands, that all that related to him was completely under God's control. In other words, he expressed the idea, that nothing happened to him by blind chance, or fate; but that everything respecting him was subject to the direction of his Creator. This is a truth not limited in its application to David alone. The Scriptures abundantly testify, that the times—all times, of all men—are in God's hand; and this will become evident, by considering some of the particular times of our lives, which are so.

I. The *time of a man's birth* is in God's hand, and is appointed by him. And as the time of our birth is appointed by him, so he appoints the land of our nativity. It is not of blind chance or fate, that one man was born thousands of years ago, and others in this age. It is not a matter of chance, that one man is born in Africa, another in Europe or America, and others in China. Still less is it of any man's own choice, where his lot shall be cast. Reason alone teaches us, that if God has a plan for the government of the world, he must appoint the time and place of men's birth. That he has a plan by which he governs the world, is most manifest, though we may not understand it in all its parts. That plan is carried on by men, and every man has a part to perform, but God has appointed to each his part. At times, he uses some, like Alaric the Goth, or Tamerlane, or Napoleon, to scourge the nations. Again, he raises others, like Moses, and Luther, and Newton, and Washington, to bless the world. Is it to be supposed that such men come into the world, and perform their part, without God's express appointment? Doth he not give to *all life and breath, and all things*, Acts xvii. 25, and can it be supposed that he who gives life, does not also appoint the time to live?

There is a time to be born, Ecc. iii. 2, and as *times are not hidden from the Almighty*, he must have foreseen the time of each, and foreseen it, because he appointed it. Nothing can be foreseen

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except what is certain, and nothing can be certain except what God hath appointed or decreed to permit.

The Scripture shows this truth in reference to particular persons. The birth of Isaac happened at the *set time*, when God promised that it should, Gen. xvii. 21. The barren Shunamite bore a son, at the *set time*, when God, by his prophet, foretold it, 2 Kings iv. 6. Frequently too, God foretold the birth of individual persons, and sometimes, even mentioned their names, long before they had an existence in the world. Josiah, the king of Judah, and Cyrus, the king of Persia, are examples of this, 1 Kings xiii. 2; Is. xliv. 28. It might be said indeed, that these are only cases of eminent persons, of whom it may very well be supposed that the time of their birth is fixed; but that the same cannot be said of the mass of mankind, who fill unimportant stations, and of whom it is scarcely worth while that God should trouble himself to appoint the time of their entrance into the world. But this is speaking of God according to our own weakness, and degrading him to a level with ourselves. Although

"Like leaves on trees the race of men are found,"

yet each separate leaf has a separate page in God's eternal book, nor is it a weariness and a trouble to him *to determine the times before appointed, and the bounds of the habitation of each*, Acts xvii. 26. If he has appointed the time for the birth of one, he could with equal ease, appoint the times of all mankind, nor could his perfect plan of government be duly carried out without such an appointment.

We infer therefore, that since he can with ease appoint the time of each man to be born, since he hath certainly appointed the time of some, and since his plan requires that that of all be fixed, *the time of our birth is in his hands.* It should be with each of us, a matter of constant thanksgiving to God, that he has appointed the time and place of our birth as he has. It is related of a heathen sage, that he thanked the gods because his birth was in an age when philosophers lived, and not when all men were ignorant, and in the enlightened land of Greece, rather than in the more barbarous regions of the world. How much more should we give thanks to God, that our birth has been in a Christian land, and of Christian parents, and in an age so full of opportunities for obtaining all knowledge, and especially the knowledge of the true God. In respect to each of us, God *hath determined*

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the times before appointed, and fixed the bounds of our habitation, so that we may seek him, and feel after him, and find him; though he be not far from every one of us, Acts xvii. 26, 27. Without at all perverting or misapplying the words of our Saviour, it may be said to each of you, my hearers, *Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see: for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them*, Luke x. 23, 24. But I exhort you also to make good use of the privileges, the opportunities for acquiring knowledge, and the means of grace, which the time of your birth and the land of your nativity have put in your power. More is given to us, than to many others, and more will be expected of us. *To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more*, Luke xii. 48.

II. *Our time to die* is also in God's hand, and is appointed by him. It is one of the great characteristics of God, that he *killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up*, 1 Sam. ii. 6. Hence Job said, *In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind*, Job xii. 10. To us, nothing seems more uncertain, and nothing is more uncertain, than the time of our death. No man has any assurance of his life. *What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*, James iv. 14. Hence the exhortation of the wise man, *Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*, Prov. xxvii. 1. No man has any assurance of life, nor can he tell how long it may be prolonged. We see the feeblest spared, while the most promising are cut down. The experience of the past year in this place, should teach us how uncertain it is, that all of us shall see the beginning of the next new year. It is on this uncertainty of life, as it respects our knowledge of it, that many of our duties are founded. Hence it is that we are to be always ready and watching. Hence it is that we are not to place our hearts too much on the world, nor to count this our portion. Hence it is that we are to feel ourselves to be, and to act as strangers and pilgrims in the earth. *Be ye ready, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh*, Luke xii. 40.

But this uncertainty exists only in reference to ourselves. There is no uncertainty with God, for he knoweth all things. He who fixed the time and place of our birth, has also fixed the

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time and manner of our death. His plan for the government of the world requires this. He brings men into the world to execute a part of his plan, and when their part is finished, he removes them to make way for others.

That *there is a time to die*, Ecc. iii. 2; that *it is appointed unto all men once to die*, Heb. ix. 27, are truths that we learn from melancholy experience, without the aid of revelation. But the Scriptures distinctly teach us, that the time to die is in God's hand, and is appointed by him. Though men live to the age of the antediluvians; though it might almost seem as if death had forgotten that some men were still alive; yet regarding every man, we must say, as said the patriarch Job, *His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds, which he cannot pass*, Job xiv. 5. Hence the expressions we meet so often in the Scriptures, referring to this appointment of our times. Thus it is said of Jacob, *The time drew nigh that Israel must die*, Gen. xlvii. 29. God said to Moses, *Behold, thy days approach that thou must die*, Deut. xxxi. 14. David said concerning Saul, *His time shall come to die*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 10. God said to David, *Thy days are fulfilled*, 2 Sam. vii. 12, and Paul, by inspiration, said of himself, *The time of my departure is at hand*, 2 Tim. iv. 6.

Sometimes, as in the case of Aaron, the high priest, the announcement of the time to die is made beforehand, and the individual, with all due solemnity, gives up his soul into the hands of his Creator, Numb. xx. 24–28. Commonly, no such announcement is made, but in all cases *there is an appointed time to man upon the earth, and his days are like the days of an hireling*, Job vii. 1, who, for a certain and defined season, performs an appointed work. Hence the prayer of the Psalmist—and it is a prayer that every man living should daily offer—*Lord, make me to know mine end, and the number of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am*, Ps. xxxix 4.

Some are perplexed at this doctrine, and at a loss how to reconcile it with the use of means, and the benefit of prayer. Why should we pray for a thing which is already determined? and use means to accomplish that, the end of which is already appointed? But this perplexity arises from a misapprehension, or rather an utter confounding of things that differ. God's appointment of our time to die is shown from the Scripture and from reason to be certain, but the time of our death is not made

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known to us. The same Scripture which makes known that there is such an appointment, also commands us to use the means to preserve our lives, and to offer prayers to God that they may be prolonged. The Scripture also tells us, that if God has determined that any man shall live, he has also determined that he shall use the means to live. In all of God's decrees and appointments, the means are inseparably connected with the end. It is our duty, therefore, to follow his revealed will, and use the means appropriate to preserve our life, and to ask for his blessing upon those means. If it be his will that we live, the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the means employed will prove efficacious for his recovery. If it be not his will that we live, no means can save us, and the physician's care and skill will prove unavailing. But this does not excuse us from using the means. It is our duty to use them in all cases, and if we fail to use them, and our friends die in consequence, the blame is ours. True, it is by God's appointment that he dies, but it is owing to our negligence. Whereas, if we use the means appropriate, and yet life is not granted, we have delivered ourselves from blame. It then becomes evident that it was not God's intention to spare life, and as we have done our duty, our conscience is at ease, and we bow to the sovereign will of God.

This subject is well illustrated in the case of Hezekiah. He was sick of a disease, that, in the ordinary course of nature, would certainly take his life away, and even the skill of physicians could not cure him. God sent the prophet to inform him of it. *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.* When Hezekiah received the message, he prayed earnestly that he might live. God heard his prayer, restored him to health, and added fifteen years to his life. God had determined to spare his life, but he had also determined to spare it in consequence of his prayer. And when he promised him fifteen additional years, Hezekiah, of course, knew perfectly well that, during those fifteen years, he must still use the ordinary means to preserve his life. He could not presume, in consequence of that promise, to dispense with his daily food, or recklessly expose himself where duty did not call him to go. Whatever difficulty there may be in theory, to reconcile God's decrees with man's free agency, and the use of means, there never is any in practice. In all cases, the path of duty is plain, for that path is laid down in the revealed will.

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This doctrine, that our time to die is in God's hand, and is appointed by him, is one that, when rightly viewed, affords great consolation to the Christian. As we have seen, it does not in the slightest degree interfere with the use of means, but rather gives encouragement to use them. It also bids us go forward in the path of duty, wherever it may lead us, without fear. Some are afraid if they engage in a particular occupation, or dwell in a certain place, their lives may be prematurely lost. But there is no call for fear, if the path of duty be plain. Go forward wherever duty calls, for your times are in God's hand, and if he has a work for you to do, he will preserve you till it is finished. It was well said by the poet,

"Man is immortal till his work is done."

God will call no man from the world as long as his work is unfinished. He will take none too soon away. Hence we derive courage for ourselves. Hence too we derive consolation, when any who promised to be eminently useful are taken away. It may seem to us that they are taken before their time, and that their work is unfinished; but it does not so seem to God. For ourselves, we cannot avoid weeping when they go; but for the church of God, we should rather say, "Another and yet another part of God's great work on earth is now accomplished, for he hath called another, and yet another, of the laborers to enter into his reward." As the time of our death is fixed, so also is the manner, and herein too the Christian may find consolation. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*, Ps. cxvi. 15. We may die alone—we may die all unattended by earthly friends—we may die in strange lands, in poverty or want—but what are all these to one who knows that his times are in God's hand? What are these to one who knows that though, like Lazarus, he dies in want at the rich man's gate, he is attended by angels, and carried by them, like Lazarus, to Abraham's bosom?

Hence too, we learn the folly of neglecting to perform any plain duty in order that we may take care of our lives. If our time to die is fixed, then it will come to us whether we stay idly at home, or whether we gird ourselves and go forth manfully to our work. It is better, far better, if the will of God be so, that we die at our post, and in the midst of our work, than like cowards or deserters from the camp. Hence too the importance of doing *now* what you have to do; your time is not forever, nor can it be

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indefinitely prolonged. Once lost, it is lost beyond any possibility of recall.

III. As the time of our birth, and the time of our death are in God's hands, and appointed by him, so it is equally manifest that all our intermediate times are in his hand. *There is a time to every purpose and to every work*, Ecc. iii. 1. *Times are not hidden from the Almighty*, Job xxiv. 1. *My times are in thy hand.*

Our ignorance of the times of our life, and our uncertainty as to our future condition, are manifest. Yet nothing is more common than the desire to pry into futurity, and read the lot that is written for us. Hence in all ages of the world, and in all lands under the sun, fortune-tellers and soothsayers have found abundant employment. Hence the arts of astrology and magic, by which so many have been deceived. Hence the numbers who have professed to "know the times," and the still greater numbers, who have been deceived by them. But all this is folly. An impenetrable veil covers the future. The lamp of experience may assist us in judging somewhat of the future, but there is no man who can tell what shall be hereafter upon the earth. Why trouble ourselves then with vain efforts to discover what cannot be known, until the time shall declare it?

Yet some desire, some interest, and perhaps anxiety, about the future is almost unavoidable. Constituted as we are, we can scarcely avoid looking ahead, and conjecturing if we cannot tell with certainty what shall befall us or our friends; and with the uncertainty that ever attends such conjectures, the undue indulgence of such a desire, may easily fill our minds with disquiet. It becomes then a question of interest, "How may this desire rise in our minds, and exert the influence it should upon our conduct, and yet not allow ourselves to be disquieted, or careful beyond measure thereabout?" And the answer we give to such a question, By being fully persuaded as David was, that *our times are in God's hands.* If we can be fully satisfied, that he controls all events that relate to us, and that nothing can occur without his wise and gracious permission, then every ground of anxiety is removed.

> "Let the unknown to-morrow
> Bring with it what it may,
> It can bring with it nothing
> But he will bear us through."

That the times and seasons, the varied changes in men's condi-

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tion are thus under God's control, is a truth often and explicitly declared in the Scriptures. In the song of Hannah, it is spoken of as one of his peculiar characteristics.

The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich;
He bringeth low, and lifteth up.
He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory, 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8.

Our times of prosperity come from God. *It is he that giveth thee power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 18. *The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich*, Prov. x. 22; and without that blessing, *it is in vain for you to rise up early, and to sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrow*, Ps. cxxvii. 2. All your labors and toils after any earthly good will prove unavailing, unless God is pleased to give the increase. What can the husbandman do, with all his labor, without the sunlight and the rain which God gives? What can the merchant or the sailor do, without the free winds of heaven which God sends? What can any man do, in any occupation, without health and strength which come from God?

Our times of adversity, too, are from God. *There is a time to weep, as well as a time to laugh, a time to mourn, as well as a time to dance.* And very few there are who are not called to pass through the one, as well as the other. At first sight, it would seem as if the favored children of God, should be exempted from the sufferings which are the common lot of all. But sound reason, experience, and Scripture, teach a different lesson. In this world, God's children are but children at best. They are in a course of training and education for another state, and need the chastisement as well as the caresses of their Father. *And what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons*, Heb. xii. 7, 8. The chastisements God sends upon his people are commonly hard to bear. They would not be chastisements if they were not. He sees where we are most deficient, and lays his strokes accordingly. It often seems to the suffering Christian that he could bear almost any other affliction but the one that he actually endures, but God knows best.

The afflictions of God's people are oftentimes great and sore, and of long continuance; but none of them come without design, nor shall they destroy the believer. *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring from the ground*, Job v. 6. *Many*

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are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all, Ps. xxxiv. 19.

Thus we see that life and death, prosperity and adversity, are from God; and with David we have reason to say, *My times are in thy hand.* This truth is to each of us, one of great consequence. We are standing at the threshold of a new year; we have already entered on its busy scenes and changing times. Who shall tell us what is before us? Who can now read the records that shall be made ere the year closes? Speaking according to probabilities much might be said. Some of you who are now far from your native land, shall be farther yet, ere twelve months pass away, while others may have returned to the bosom of their friends. Some of you who are now in feeble health, may become strong, while others rejoicing in their strength, shall find it fail. Who of us shall be laid in our graves during the coming year? It would be strange were all this company to continue in life so long. And if the summons comes for any, are you ready to depart?

Scenes of joy, and scenes of sorrow, the height of prosperity, and the deep of adversity, sickness and health, life and death, are words of frequent use, and momentous meaning in the history of our race; but who knows how to apply them beforehand to any individual? We cannot tell. But this we do know. *Our times are in God's hands*, and it is well they are. *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power*, Acts i. 7. They are concealed from us in mercy. Who could bear the sight of all that may come upon him in the world? Life itself would be a burden, if we always carried with us the certainty of the calamities that are impending. By not knowing, we are led to trust more implicitly upon the merits of the Saviour, and the grace and protection of God. Let us then cheerfully commit to him our temporal interests, and seek the welfare of our souls, and the salvation of Jesus Christ. So shall the year roll away, and whatever our outward state may be, whatever the lot of each, whether length of days, or speedy departure, from this world, we shall find abundant cause for peace, and thankfulness. Like David in the Psalm from which the text is taken we shall ever say, *Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.*

Macao, Jan. 5, 1845.

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SERMON XXXVIII.

CHRIST AS THE SEARCHER OF THE HEART.

But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.—JOHN ii. 24, 25.

THE words of the text were spoken of our Saviour soon after his entrance on his public ministry. He had gone to Jerusalem during the first passover after he commenced his ministry; he had there shown his zeal for God by casting out the merchants and traders from the temple; he had there spoken in figurative language of his death and resurrection after three days; and he there performed so many miracles, as astonished all who saw them —and in consequence, *many believed on his name when they saw the miracles which he did*, v. 23. But it would seem that among those who then believed there were many like Simon Magus, who *believed, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done*, and yet continued, notwithstanding this belief, *in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity*, Acts viii. 13, 23. Experience shows but too plainly how common is such a faith as this. It does not work by love, nor purify the heart, and is therefore justly said by the apostle James, to be *dead*, James ii. 26.

But our Lord was not deceived by the professed belief of these men. He did not entrust himself to them, nor hastily number them among his disciples, for he *knew all men*, both who really believed, and who did not. And this knowledge too was underived. He needed no assistance from men, to enable him to judge of the characters of those by whom he was surrounded. He formed his opinion of men's characters, by an intuitive glance into their hearts. *He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.*

The text teaches us most plainly that Jesus Christ knows the hearts of all man, and that no secret emotion can lurk there un-

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detected by him. Nor is this a doctrine taught here alone. It is one that meets us on every page of the gospels, and under every variety of form and expression. During his public ministry, our blessed Lord associated with all classes of Jewish society. The Pharisees indeed sneered at him as the *friend and associate of publicans and sinners*, nor did he disdain that title. But he also sat at the tables of the Pharisees, and lodged with men of wealth, though perhaps the next day he received charity from a poor woman, or reposed his wearied frame in a fisherman's open boat. He associated with them all, and he knew them all. The crafty politician, the designing priest and scribe, the sanctimonious Pharisee, and the skilful lawyer, as well as the fisherman, the widow woman and the child, found in him one who understood perfectly their several characters.

During one of his visits to Capernaum, a man sick of the palsy was brought to him to be healed, and such was the earnestness and the faith, both of the sick man and his friends, that our Saviour took special notice of it, and to reward it, said to the sick of the palsy, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.* The scribes and Pharisees who were present began to reason in their hearts, and to say within themselves, for they uttered no words, *This man speaketh blasphemies.* Scarcely had the thought risen in their hearts, ere Jesus *knowing their thoughts*, reproved them for it, Matt ix. 4, Mark ii. 8, Luke v. 18.

At another time, he was teaching in the synagogue, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and Pharisees watched him whether he would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him. They spake no words to disclose their purposes, for that would have defeated the object they had in view. But how great must have been their surprise, when the Lord, *knowing their thoughts*, publicly called upon them for the reason why good might not be done on the Sabbath day? Answer or reason they could give none, for they were confounded at the disclosure of thoughts, whose baseness they wished to conceal even from themselves, Luke vi. 6, Matt. xii. 10, Mark iii. 1.

He cast out devils, and showed so many signs that the people were amazed. But the Pharisees, to detract if possible from his reputation, secretly circulated a report that he was in league with the powers of darkness, and had cast out devils only by the assistance of Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Again, to their

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confusion, they found that *he knew their thoughts*, and had an answer and a reproof ready for every imagination, Matt. xii. 25, Luke xi. 14.

He was asked by a Pharisee to eat with him, and while he sat at meat, a woman of the city which was a sinner, according to the custom of the country, which allowed any person to enter the dining hall, came in, and weeping behind him began to wash his feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment. The Pharisee, glad of anything that would give him a lower idea of the character of Jesus, *spake within himself*, saying that Christ could not be a prophet, or he would not suffer such a woman to touch him. How little he knew of the deep heart-searching power of our Lord! The Saviour, *answering* his thoughts (for they lay as yet in his heart, unseen save by him who knew what was in man), with inimitable beauty and force showed him the difference between his own vain-glorious, unhumbled thought, and the deep penitence of her on whom he looked with so much disdain, Luke vii. 40.

At another time, the combined wisdom or cunning of the Pharisees and the Herodians laid a deep and crafty scheme to catch him in his words. Their question was concerning the payment of tribute to Cæsar, and to their plain question *Shall we give, or shall we not give?* they thought it well nigh impossible that he should give an answer without committing himself, and affording matter of accusation. But sorely did they repent of their temerity. *Knowing their hypocrisy, and perceiving their wickedness,* he said, *Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?* and the answer he gave was such as quite confounded them, and from that day forth, no man durst ask him any more questions, Matt. xxii. 15, Mark xii. 13, Luke xx. 20.

He knew what was in man, and he knew all men. No matter how obscure their station, or how secret their past course of life, or how apparently casual their interview with him, he could in a few words disclose to them all their past history, and cause them to cry, like the woman of Samaria, *Come see a man which told me all that ever I did*, John iv. 29.

It was especially in his intercourse with his disciples, that our Lord's wonderful knowledge of the human heart was displayed. With regard to them it was emphatically true, that he knew what was in them, and needed no testimony of men to confirm or mod-

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ify his judgment. The zeal of Simon Peter, and his boldness and energy of character, gave him an important rank among the apostles, both before and after the crucifixion of our Lord. The piercing eye of the Saviour beheld this trait in his character the moment he first saw him, and he said, *Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone*, John i. 42. And yet with all the zeal and energy that Peter possessed, the Lord saw that he lacked that firmness which should resist temptation, and when the disciple told him, *I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death*, the Lord replied, *I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me*, Luke xxii. 34. The event proved too truly the accuracy of our Lord's knowledge of his character.

We are so much in the habit of regarding the apostle John as the beloved disciple, that we scarcely think of him as having ever possessed any other than a mild and gentle disposition. But the reproof he gave to one who cast out devils in Christ's name, because he followed not with them, Mark ix. 38, and the proposition he made to call down fire from heaven, and consume the Samaritan village, that would not receive our Lord, Luke ix. 50, show that Christ better understood his character, when he surnamed John and James, *Boanerges, or sons of thunder*, Mark iii. 17. How appropriate too this name was to James, may easily be seen by those who read the thrilling exhortations and solemn denunciations of his epistle. No sooner, too, had Nathanael appeared before him, than he showed his knowledge of *what was in man, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* The astonished Nathanael said unto him, *Whence knowest thou me?* but his astonishment was heightened by the reply he received, *When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* Beneath the dark and impenetrable shade of the fig-tree, Nathanael had perhaps been pouring out his prayers for the consolation of Israel. He was sure no eye but the eye of God had seen him, and when he found himself in the presence of one, who even there had beheld the secret emotions of his heart, he could not contain the exclamation that burst from his lips, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*, John i. 47–49.

From the time of his baptism by John, until the day that he was taken up to heaven, he came in and went out with his disciples, and they must daily have felt that they were in the presence of one who read every thought of their hearts. There was a trai-

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tor among them, but this was not concealed from him; for it is expressly recorded, *Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him*, John vi. 64. When some of his professed disciples murmured at his doctrine, Jesus *knew it in himself*, and said unto them, *Doth this offend you?* John vi. 61. When they disputed among themselves, which of them should be the greatest, though they spake not of it to Christ, and indeed sought rather to conceal it from him, yet he *perceived the thought of their heart*, and by the example of a little child, in whose heart no such ambitious thoughts had yet risen, he showed them the disposition of the heart that he approved, Luke ix. 47, Mark ix. 33, 34.

During his last discourse with his disciples, something was said respecting which they wished to ask for fuller information. Jesus, knowing that they were desirous to ask him, answered their unuttered inquiries so fully and satisfactorily, that they could not contain their surprise. *Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God*, John xvi. 19, 30.

There were many occasions in the life of our Lord, when his consummate knowledge of the human heart was exhibited; but I have preferred to mention only those in which the possession of this attribute is distinctly ascribed to him. There are, however, one or two other particulars in which it is so evidently implied, that they deserve more than a passing notice.

1. Jesus Christ came to this world to be, and he still continues to be, the great Prophet or Teacher of his church. In order to fulfil this office, he must not only understand perfectly all the will of God, and the deep purposes of the divine mind respecting our salvation,—he must also be able to communicate so much of this knowledge as is necessary to salvation to each and every member of his church. But even among men, no one can well fulfil the office of a teacher, who has not carefully studied and well understood the character of his pupils. No one can be *apt to teach*, nor rightly communicate knowledge, who does not know the ignorance, the wants, and the capacities of his scholars. Nor can Jesus Christ instruct his disciples, unless he thoroughly knows the heart, and the disposition of each. Behold then the greatness of his knowledge of what is in man. His church is composed of the men of every land and nation, of every age and rank. The profoundest of philosophers, the ablest of statesmen, the most sa-

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gacious and the acutest intellects, have sat at his feet, and learned of him, as well as the ignorant Hottentot, the barbarous Esquimaux, and the imbecile Polynesian. He has known the deep ignorance and stupidity of the one, he has fathomed all the wisdom of the other, and he has taught them all. He has opened the hearts of each to receive the truth, and this has been a far harder work, than to open the eyes of the blind who came to him for sight. Satan hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, and ere any could receive the knowledge of the truth, it has been necessary that the great Teacher should remove the scales that covered the mental and the moral eye. These obstructions to spiritual sight being removed, he has poured divine light into the soul. The deep things of God, the hidden mysteries of the kingdom, the wonders of redemption—these he reveals to each of his chosen ones. And yet this revelation is not an indiscriminate one, nor does he give to each the same amount of knowledge. He who knows what is in man, knows well how much they can bear, and enlarges their knowledge in proportion to their capacities and desires, John xvi. 12. What less than *omniscience* is adequate to a work like this?

2. And as the prophetical office of Christ implies the possession of perfect knowledge of the human heart, so also does his office of final and universal Judge. God hath appointed him to judge the world in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31, and though men laugh at the intimation now, and say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* Yet the day is fast approaching when all nations shall be gathered before his bar to render an account for the deeds done in the body. Nor is this account to be confined to outward actions. It shall include even *every idle word*, Matt. xii. 36, and the secret thoughts of the heart must then be tried. *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil*, Ecc. xii. 14. However deep laid, or carefully concealed your thoughts may now be, before the all-piercing eyes of the Judge, in that great day, *there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known*, Luke xii. 2. But to execute such a judgment as this—to weigh the thoughts, and words and actions of all men of every age—to estimate aright the character of each, and award to each his just deserts, *according to his works*, what less than infinite wisdom is required? *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* At that great trial day there will be no need of human witnesses, for the judge is he, of

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whom our text says, *He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.*

3. In the doctrine of our text, that Jesus Christ is perfectly acquainted with the hearts of men, we have one of the strongest arguments to prove *the essential Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is a truth frequently recorded in the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, that it is God's prerogative to search and know the human heart. When David was at the point to die, he said to Solomon, with all solemnity, *Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. In the prophecies of Jeremiah, God is represented as challenging this attribute to himself. *The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? I Jehovah search the heart, I try the reins*, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. And Solomon, as if to preclude any shadow of doubt on this point, expressly declares that the knowledge of the heart, is peculiar to God alone. In his prayer at the dedication of the temple—a prayer dictated by immediate inspiration, and left on record for our instruction—we meet these words, addressed to God, *Thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men*, 1 Kings viii. 39. In sublime language the prophet Amos declares the same truth. *Lo! he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, Jehovah, the God of hosts is his name*, Amos iv. 13. To all these testimonies from the Old Testament, agree the words of the apostles, in their prayer, before the appointment of Matthias to the apostleship, *Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen*, Acts i. 24.

Now we have seen, in the passages already adduced from the gospels, that Jesus Christ did possess the power of searching the heart. How often did he declare unto men their thoughts, and how expressly do the evangelists testify that he knew all things? As if to put the matter beyond the possibility of a doubt, we find our Lord himself, in the book of Revelation, claiming this power, and that in the very words used by the prophets of the Old Testament, when describing the majesty of Jehovah, *These things saith the Son of God: all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts*, Rev. ii. 18–23. The possession of any one of the incommunicable attributes of Jehovah is sufficient to prove its possessor to be divine.

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Were there nothing else in the word of God respecting the divinity of Christ, the proofs already adduced on this one point, would be sufficient to establish it. But these are but a part selected out of a mass of proofs, all equally clear.

The doctrine of Christ's divinity is not an unimportant one in the Christian system. It is not one that may be held or rejected at pleasure, without endangering the salvation of the soul. It lies at the very foundation of our religion, and a mistake or error here is fatal.

Either Jesus Christ is God, or he is not. There is no middle point between these two propositions. One or the other must be believed, and the one not believed must be rejected. If Christ be not God, he is a creature, and those who ascribe divinity to him, and worship him, are guilty of exalting a creature to the throne of God. But to worship a creature is to commit idolatry, and of this monstrous sin, are the Trinitarians guilty, if Jesus Christ be not truly God.

If Jesus Christ be truly God, and we say he is not, then we rob him of his divinity, and this is a crime that he will not lightly pass by. Will a man rob God? Yet here is a robbery, before which ordinary sacrilege might pass for virtue. It takes the Creator and hurls him from his rightful throne. It ascribes to him only a delegated power to rule, where he possesses inherent and supreme authority. Oh my hearers, if any of you have fallen into this dangerous error, I beseech you to examine again the reasons of your belief, and be you well persuaded ere you suffer yourselves to believe that he who searches the heart, and knows what is in man, is not truly divine. The proof of his divinity does not rest alone, on the names of God, which are so frequently given to him. It is founded equally on the divine attributes he possesses; and the honor and worship paid to him; and it is incontestably argued from the work he came to perform. A work, which he finished, but for which no creature, even though the highest of all that God has made, is sufficient.

4. We learn from the doctrine of our text, how impossible it is to deceive the Saviour, and hence draw a warning against hypocrisy, and all self-deception in religion. There is much that passes among men for religion that is not approved of God. There are times when an outward attention to the duties enjoined in the gospel, is not only common and approved but even fashionable. There are many vices, which no man who has a proper

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regard for himself, or the good opinion of society, would allow himself to practise. There are many virtues, the practice of which, not only adds to our own comfort, and gains for us the approval of conscience, but they secure the admiration of the world, and increase our respectability among men. I do not say that this is wrong. On the contrary, it is right. But the error with most men, is that they are satisfied when so much is gained, and stop at this point. My friends, this is not enough. Man cannot search the heart, nor know what is in other men. Man can scarcely know even his own heart, and many who are not guilty of intentional hypocrisy, are most grossly deceived, in regard to their own condition and character. In the concerns of our souls, we do not deal with men but with the heart-searching Jehovah. Our Judge is one who knows what is in man far better than we do ourselves; and who needs not the testimony of man. He searcheth the heart, he scrutinizes its prevailing dispositions and feelings; he looks for more than external morality; he requires not merely that you do justly, but that you *love mercy* and walk humbly with God. He seeks for the fruits of the Spirit—*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness*, and when these are wanting, no outward profession, no attendance on external forms, no payment of tithes, or noisy zeal can secure his favor. *Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*, 2 Cor. x. 18. Therefore search carefully your own hearts, and pray for divine assistance in discovering what you are, and what you should be, and remember the words of the apostle Paul, *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*, 1 Cor. xi. 31.

5. Finally, from this doctrine of our Saviour's knowledge of the heart, we draw *encouragement for perseverance in every duty, and consolation for every time of trial.*

The Christian's course on earth, is a course of labor, he has many duties to perform, and must ofttimes prosecute his labor and perform his duties, not merely without the approbation, perhaps even in the face of the opposition of the world, but he must often labor all alone, without even the assistance of a fellow-Christian. I speak to some who know my meaning, when I say, that there are times when the heart is almost ready to break under a sense of discouragement. There are times when every hope seems disappointed; when every duty seems to have been left undone; and when in the words of the sweet singer of Israel, groans and tears become the constant companions of the believer.

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This is especially apt to be the case, when the believer is left without a Christian friend, with whom to take counsel and offer prayer. But I say to you, my friends, you are not alone in all this. There is One who knows most thoroughly all your discouragements, and wants. There is One who has seen every emotion of your heart, who has noticed the sincerity and the earnestness of your desires for his presence. He has heard the unuttered prayers of your heart, and comprehended the feelings that could find no words for their expression. He knows all things, and does not need that you should ask in measured phrase, for he knows what is in man. In all your sorrows, infirmities, and disappointments, he has been a sympathizing High Priest, and as able to help as he is ready to sympathize. And if he has not already appeared for your help and deliverance, it has not been because he knew not of your wants, but because he saw that the proper time had not yet come for his appearance. Come, therefore, with boldness unto him, declare unto him every want and every sorrow: you shall find an ear ever open, and a heart ever ready. The duties that you have performed in silence and obscurity, are recorded before him. The prayers you offer in secret shall be rewarded openly; and in the day of final accounts, it shall matter little whether you have been celebrated or unknown among men. He who knows what is in man, and saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, shall acknowledge all his followers, however humble or obscure among men, in the presence of his Father, and of the holy angels. The Lord grant to each of us, to find favor in his sight in that day.

Macao, January 12, 1845.

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SERMON XXXIX.

THE PROPITIATION OF CHRIST.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous: and he is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.—1 John ii. 1, 2.

By the law is the knowledge of sin, Rom. iii. 20. By the law is the warning against sin. By the law is the punishment of sin. By it is the wrath of God against sin, and his abhorrence of it revealed; and the conscience and heart of man made to perceive its nature. *I had not known sin but by the law,* Rom. vii. 7.

These things are by the law, but here its office stops. By the law is not the forgiveness of sin. By the law is not the washing away of the stain of sin. It is a rule of life, and a standard of reward for a holy being. *The man which doeth those things, shall live by them,* Lev. xviii. 5; Rom. x. 5. But if he do them not, there is no help for him in the law. *The blood of bulls and goats, can never take away sin. And the soul that sinneth, it shall die,* Ezek. xviii. 20; Heb. x. 4. These things saith the law.

By the gospel also, is the knowledge of sin, for sin is never rightly known except when seen at the cross of Christ. By the gospel is repentance for sin. By the gospel is the forgiveness of sin. By the gospel is the taking away of sin, and the cleansing of the soul from its defilement. By the gospel is that holiness of heart and life, without which no man shall see God. Hence, said the apostle, *These things I write unto you that ye sin not.*

How little they know of the gospel, who suppose it gives any, even the least license to sin. Its prohibitions are as solemn and as strict, as those of the law given in thunder and in flame from Mount Sinai, and it excludes it more effectually from the heart. As well as the law, it saith, *Stand in awe and sin not,* Ps. iv. 4. It was the Saviour himself, who said to the impotent man he healed,

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Sin no more, John xv. 14. It was he who said to the woman taken in adultery, *Go and sin no more*, John viii. 11. The gospel holds up as distinctly as the law, the character of God; nay, it exhibits that character far more clearly, for it pictures it in the life of Christ *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3, and when our minds are awed by the contemplation of infinite purity and virtue, it says to us, *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy*, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. *The grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,* who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 11–13.

The gospel has a universal offer. Its conditions fit it for all men. Hear its voice in our text. *If any man sin.* In what words could an offer for all men be more certainly expressed? It saith not, "If any man is wise—if any man is rich—if any man is happy—if any man is sorrowful." There might be persons not embraced in such a call. But it saith, *If any man sin*—and who is not included here? There are some who are not wise, and some who are not rich, and some who are not happy, and a few who are not sorrowful, but there is none who does not sin, and therefore, none to whom the words of the text are not spoken. *Who can say, I have made my heart pure, I am clean from my sin?* Prov. xx. 9. In God's sight the heavens are not clean, Job xv. 14. *Yea, he charged his angels with folly*, Job iv. 18. *And what is man then, that he should be clean? and that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?* Job xiv. 14. Behold, *there is no man that sinneth not*, 1 Kings viii. 46. Solomon testified that *there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not*, Ecc. vii. 20. And the apostle Paul shows, with all possible minuteness and solemnity, that *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*, Rom. iii. 23. Look to the spectacle exhibited at Calvary. Behold him *who knew no sin*, 2 Cor. v. 21, undergoing a death such as no criminal ever suffered since the foundation of the world. Whence these sufferings—these agonies—that bitter cry

* του μεγαλου θεου και σωτηρος ημων Ιησου Χριστου, "Of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ," as this passage should be translated, according to the *invariable* force of the Greek article.

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—that marvellous death? *All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*, Is. liii. 6.

Such are the declarations of Scripture, and I need scarcely appeal to experience, for the truth of what every one of you has seen around you, and felt within you.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. i. 18. We are sinners before his bar; we are placed on trial; the throne is set, the books are opened, and the judgment is begun. What hope is there *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?* 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. What plea have you to offer before him? The Judge of all the earth will do right, nor shall any be condemned unheard. *God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges*, Ps. li. 4.

But the terrors of his appearing, and the majesty of his throne, shall put to silence all the vain excuses men now bring for sin, nor shall any dare to justify or palliate what now they behold with unconcern. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Ps. cxxx. 3. *How should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand*, Job ix. 2, 3. Hence the prayer of the Psalmist, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*, Ps. cxliii. 2.

Let the sentence be pronounced; the criminal has pleaded guilty. Let the ministers of justice bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, Matt. xxv. 30. There is no hope for him forever, but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; these are his portion, for *the wages of sin is death*, Rom. vi. 23.

But stay! A hand is lifted up. A motion is made to arrest the judgment. A plea is put in his defence, for an Advocate appears. Who is this that comes before the eternal throne, undaunted by the fiery stream that issues and comes forth? Sinner, guilty, condemned, and despairing, look upon him, and see if thou canst recognize the lineaments of his face. He wears a human form. *One like unto the Son of man.* There are scars in his hand. There are marks of suffering on his brow. He hath been *acquainted with grief.* But now a glory crowns his head—authority beams forth from his eye—his arm is clothed with power, and majesty attends his steps. Who is this? Dost thou

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not know him? Once he walked the earth, *a man of sorrows*, but now he is anointed with the oil of gladness, and exalted at the right hand of God. Once a homeless wanderer, and a friend of publicans and sinners, he knows what sufferings mean, and can sympathize with them that are in any sorrow. Now, he is exalted *far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion*, Eph. i. 21. It is JESUS CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUS. *It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 34.

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father. The word (παρακλητος,) advocate, signifies an intercessor, one who pleads the cause of an offender before the judge. One who mediates between two parties, offering arguments in arrest of judgment, and reasons for the bestowment of favors. Such is Jesus Christ, in the great work of salvation. On the one side is arrayed the holy and just God, whose law cannot be violated with impunity, and on the other, men who have sinned and incurred the penalty of the law. Bold must be the Being who would undertake the cause of persons in such a plight as this. Had it been proposed to the angelic host, there is not one of them that would have dared to assume our cause. But there is help for us, laid upon one that is mighty to save. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. He undertakes to secure the acquittal of every sinner that will trust his cause in his hands, and makes it his constant business to accomplish what he has promised. *He ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25.

There are those who have dreamed of other mediators, and other advocates. There are even some who have foolishly thought to plead their own cause at that solemn tribunal, but the Scriptures expressly inform us, that there is none, save he of whom we speak, that shall succeed. *There is salvation in no other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, but the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Acts iv. 12.

The prisoner placed at the bar of any earthly court, finds it necessary to secure the services of an able advocate. How important that our advocate in the court of heaven be well qualified for the work he has undertaken! Our hopes rest upon him, our cause is in his hand, and if he fails, the sentence must

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go against us. But in the character of him who has undertaken to plead for men, there is everything to encourage our hopes. He possesses every personal qualification that can be conceived necessary. By his possession of the divine nature, he is on an equality with the Judge, and stands before him without fear. By his possession of human nature, he is on a level with his clients, and can sympathize with them in every feeling and every fear. By the union of the two natures in his one person, he becomes *a daysman* (or umpire), *who can lay his hand upon both*, Job ix. 33. But his crowning qualification is, that he is a righteous Advocate, *Jesus Christ, the Righteous*. How different, in this respect, from those for whom he pleads! Partaking of the same nature, yet without sin. But it was most appropriate that he should possess such a character. He stands and pleads before a holy Judge, and must, therefore, be holy himself. He comes not only to secure our pardon, but our sanctification. He must needs, therefore, possess a spotless character himself. *Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*, 1 John iii. 5.

It is most refreshing to the soul, to consider the character of Jesus Christ as a holy Saviour in human nature. From the days of Adam's innocence in Paradise, until our times, the world has never seen one like him. Possessing all the excellencies of human nature, without its failings, the wicked one came, and *found nothing in him*, John xiv. 30. Born of a woman, yet with a nature incorrupt—associating with wicked men, but never led astray by their evil counsels—tempted, but never sinning—speaking often, but never an idle word—doing many things, but never an unholy action, he embodied, in his own example, absolute perfection. *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, 1 Pet. ii. 22.

In such an Advocate, we can repose the fullest confidence. His spotless character gives him every possible advantage, and secures for him a favorable audience. He will use no false pleas, he will bring no unsound arguments; nor is it possible that he should deceive those that put their trust in him.

The character of our Advocate gives us ground for hope, and yet vastly more than this is needful, before we can deem our safety certain. The prisoner of an earthly law is not rendered secure, simply by the unblemished reputation of the advocate he employs. The necessities of our case require more than this.

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Not only must the character of our advocate be above suspicion or reproach, but he must have a plea to offer which shall overbalance the overwhelming guilt which weighs us down. The law requires perfect obedience, and this we have not given. Failing in this, the law demands satisfaction. Some men think that, by the simple exercise of his sovereignty, God might dispense with the requisitions of the law, and grant pardon on account of penitence alone. Such is not the word of God. The heavens and earth may pass away, but his word cannot pass, and that word declares that, *without the shedding of blood, there is no remission*, Heb. ix. 22. But if the blood of the criminal be shed—if the full penalty of the law be inflicted on him, there can be no hope. He must lie down in sorrow forever. What plea, then, can the great Advocate offer? What arguments can he present? Extenuate the guilt of the clients he may not do, for he is a righteous Advocate. Explain away the requirements of the law he cannot do. It is God's law—it is his own law, *and he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil*, Matt. v. 17.

Let the prisoner of hope turn him to his strong hold, and dismiss every fear, Zech. ix. 12. The ransom is paid, the debt is cancelled, the satisfaction of the law is already made. *We have an Advocate, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* A propitiation is that which renders God propitious, which satisfies his justice, removes his anger, and restores his favor; and all this has been done by him who is the advocate for man. Do you ask how he has done it? The answer is, By taking the place of man, and suffering in his own person, the penalty threatened by the law. The law had no claims upon him. He was not bound to obey its precepts, nor could he in his divinity suffer its penalty. But that he might rescue man from the misery in which he had plunged himself, he voluntarily put himself under the law; that he might endure its penalty, and thus satisfy every demand of justice, he took our nature into union with his own. *Being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being formed in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death. Even the death of the cross*, Phil. ii. 6–8. Contemplate the life and actions of Christ. View him in all his onward course, from the time he first left his throne on high, till he was lifted up between heaven and earth, a spectacle to angels and men. Reflect on all his suf-

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ferings, from the time that his tender frame was laid in the manger, till the hour when he cried, *It is finished, and gave up the ghost.* Why all this humiliation? Why these sufferings and sorrows? Why was he thus acquainted with grief? It was not —it could not be for himself. He had no sins for which to suffer. It could not be merely that he might be an example of suffering affliction with patience, or a warning to them of sin, showing them its evil effects. All this he doubtless was; but that he was this alone, or that it was for this alone he came, is what the Scriptures do not teach; nor does such a representation harmonize with the justice of God. Suffering cannot be, except on the account of sin; and it was beeause Christ was the propitiation for our sins, that he suffered as he did. *His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed,* 1 Pet. ii. 24. *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,* 1 Pet. iii. 18.

The law of God had been broken by the sinner, and in order that justice might be satisfied, blood must be shed. Our Advocate bared his bosom, and shed his own blood. The law of God required perfect and constant obedience, in order that eternal life might be procured; and our Advocate, who was under no law, put himself under the law, and obeyed it in every jot and tittle. The master of all evil put in a claim for the souls of men, that they were his lawful captives, and our Advocate met him on his own ground, and gave him battle. Sore was the conflict, but of no doubtful end. The seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head, and triumphantly exclaimed, *Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered,* Is. xlix. 25. Such is the propitiation of Christ; such the sacrifice he offered; such the effects it is designed to produce. A question occurs, What is the value of this sacrifice? Is it sufficient for all the applications that may be made. There is no man who may not say with David, *Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me,* Ps. xl. 12. Is the sacrifice of Christ sufficient to atone for all these? Is the fountain for sin and uncleanness which he has opened, copious enough to wash away the sins of all men, of every land and nation? The sacrifices of the Levitical law, imperfect and insufficient as they were to take away sin, Heb. x. 1–4, were intended only for the Jews, and Jewish proselytes—is this sacrifice of greater value and wider application? Important questions! but we have an

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answer in our text. *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Yes. There is no limit to its sufficiency. It was the human nature of Christ that suffered; but the union of that nature with his divinity gave those sufferings a value fully infinite. There is no limit to the merits of our Saviour. The ocean has its boundaries, the sands on the sea-shore their certain number, the stars of heaven their several names and appointed stations, but boundary, or limit, or measure, in the salvation of Christ, there is no one. The offer of the gospel, as we have seen, is universal, *If any man sin*, and the reason why it is universal, is because there is enough in Christ for all.

How shall we obtain the benefit of this salvation? The apostle in the epistle from which our text is taken, was writing to those who had already obtained it, and therefore it is not mentioned in this passage how they should lay hold of it. But the apostle Paul has told us. According to his declarations, men *are justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, Rom. iii. 24, 25. Faith is therefore the instrument through which, or by means of which, the sinner apprehends the merits of Christ, and secures salvation. It is the hand which grasps the rope by which he is drawn into the ark. *By grace ye are saved through faith*, Eph. ii. 8. Hast thou faith? If not, beseech God to give it to you, for it is his gift. Hast thou faith? If thou hast, come unto Christ with the disciple's prayer, *Lord increase our faith*, Luke xvii. 5.

From this subject learn,

1. The love and condescension of God. In human courts the advocate of the crown is the prosecutor of the prisoner at the bar, and all his energies are directed to secure the condemnation of the accused. But it is not so at God's bar. There, though we have so grossly rejected him, and broken his holy laws, he himself has appointed an advocate for the guilty, and such an advocate as cannot fail to win his cause. It is not the manner of men thus to act, but it is the manner of the long-suffering and merciful God. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iv. 10. Herein also we see the perfection of the salvation offered to men, and its certainty of success. No part of it is left to false and erring man, but every part is secured by God himself. He has

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provided everything that is necessary, and hath appointed him who purchased it at the expense of his own life, to be the great dispenser of it to all them that believe. We have an advocate righteous, and abundantly able; and he has a plea of infinite worth, and God has given a promise, on which faith may rest, with undoubting confidence. For he saith, *If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom*, Job xxxiii. 23, 24.

2. Learn hence, the necessity of applying immediately unto this advocate for safety. The fact that men are sinners, and that a propitiation was needed, shows the truth of what is elsewhere recorded, that the natural condition of men is one of great and imminent danger. Most men who live under the sound of the gospel, seem utterly unconscious of their true condition. Hear the words of our Lord himself. *He that believeth not is condemned already*, John iii. 18. You are *by nature the children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3, and are you still careless and unconcerned? How strange should we think it, to see a prisoner sleeping at the tribunal where he was on trial for his life, and yet no more irrational would his course be, than that of multitudes in our days, and I fear of some who now hear my voice. Tell men they are sinners, and they admit that they are. Tell them they are in danger of God's wrath, and they answer, "we know it." Tell them of Christ the great advocate, and of the propitiation through faith in his blood, and they say, "it is a good thing." Tell them that without embracing the salvation he offers, they cannot be saved —and what is the answer we get? *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee*, Acts xxiv. 25. Oh, my hearers, put me not off thus again. Ruin not your own souls by these repeated delays. Awake to righteousness and sin not. Flee from the avenger of blood, while the gates of the city of refuge are yet open. Take shelter in the cross of Christ, ere he swear in his wrath, ye shall not enter into his rest.

Finally. To you who by faith in the blood of Christ—for some such I trust there are here—have already found God propitious, I say, Show your gratitude to your great advocate and intercessor on high, by constantly remembering, and constantly honoring him. He does not forget you. You do not give him time or opportunity to do so. You are constantly sinning, even though your hearts be renewed, and were it not that *he ever liveth*

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to make intercession, it would go hard if you ever entered heaven. You are compassed about with sins and infirmities; forget not, therefore, the only Being who can deliver you from condemnation. When overwhelmed with the sense of sin, do not so dishonor him as to despair of his grace and ability still to save. *If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father.*

I need scarcely say, that all this furnishes no excuse or pretext whatever for continuing in sin. It is not possible that he who has really fled for refuge to the grace of Christ, should continue in the habitual commission of known sin. It is a contradiction both in terms, and in things. *How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* Rom. vi. 2. But though the believer does not sin habitually, nor of choice, yet the remains of his corrupt nature, *the sin that dwelleth in him*, is constantly leading him to do that he would not, Rom. vii. 15–17. And for such, yea, for all men, the only, the all-sufficient resource, is found in Christ. *These things I write unto you, that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sin, and not for ours only, but also for the sin of the whole world.*

Oh God, add thy blessing!

MACAO, January 19, 1845.

Extract from the Author's Journal.

MACAO, January 19th, 1845.

It is three years to-day since I left my father's house. Many changes have come over me since then; trials and afflictions have befallen me, but out of them all the Lord hath delivered me, and having obtained help of him I continue to this day. For nearly two years I have been preaching to a small congregation of English and Americans, once every Sabbath. To-day I preached my last sermon to them, and bade them farewell. How many of them shall I meet in peace at the great day of reckoning? As far as they are concerned at least, I feel myself pure from their blood. I have not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. And to some at least it has been a blessing; would that the same could be said of all!—*Memoir*, p. 288.

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SERMON XL.

ON OFFENCES.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come: but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh!—MATTHEW xviii. 7.

These words of our Lord should strike the heart of every professor of religion with fear. They are not addressed to the world at large, but to the members of the visible church, and specially to such as hold responsible and influential stations in the church. They were spoken to the disciples, just after they had witnessed three of our Lord's great miracles—the transfiguration, the casting of a devil out of a child, which the disciples were not able to accomplish, and the procuring of tribute money from the mouth of a fish. One would have thought that such wonders as these would have driven worldly thoughts, and schemes of self-aggrandizement, from the disciples' minds,—but it seems not, for *at the same time*, they came to Christ to know who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. By a most touching illustration, even that of a little child, our Lord rebuked their proud imaginations, and then, referring to the dangerous consequences of ambition, jealousy, and envy among his disciples, he spoke the memorable words of the text, with many others of like import.

The warning of the text is a personal warning to every member of Christ's church; but it is more especially so to us, who, like the apostles to whom it was first addressed, are sent to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom where it has not been before received. I pray you therefore to give me your candid and prayerful attention, as I proceed to show the meaning of our Saviour's words.

I. Let us consider first, why

It must needs be that offences come.

By *offences* are meant, whatsoever things act as stumbling-blocks, causing men to take offence at the gospel, to sin, and to

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lose their souls. Whatsoever brings disgrace on religion, or leads men to neglect the worship of God, or to plunge deeper in sin, is an *offence*, and melancholy as it is, it is too true, that offences must come. The idea that no offence will arise, is one that cannot be entertained at all. (It is *Ανενδεκτον*, Luke xvii. 1.) There is a necessity that they come, and all the prudence and piety of the church cannot prevent them from coming. Sin is a terrible thing. It has brought confusion into the world, and it *must needs be*, that dreadful consequences follow. Nothing is exempt from this law. There must needs be storms in the air, and earthquakes in the land. There must needs be revolutions in society, and overturnings among the nations; and alas that we should say it! there must needs be offences even in the church of Christ, by reason of which, *woe unto the world!* Say not that these offences come alone from the ungodly, fierce volcanoes rage in the fairest lands, and most genial climes, and the most ruinous offences arise in what should be a paradise on earth, even in the church of God. It is evident from the Scriptures—*There must be heresies among you*, says the apostle Paul to the Christians of Corinth, 1 Cor. xi. 19. *The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats*, 1 Tim. iv. 1–3. Of whom does the Spirit thus expressly predict these offences, if not of a church to which one of the most instructive epistles in the New Testament was written; and whose faith at the time when this was written, was *spoken of throughout the whole world?* Rom. i. 8. And from whom does the same apostle say that in the last days perilous times shall come, if not from such as have *the form of godliness*, 2 Tim. iv. 1–5. Professor of religion! tremble for thyself. It is in reference to such as thou that the words of Christ in the text, and of Paul in the epistles, are especially spoken.

Is it asked why offences must needs come, and why specially from the church? The answer is found in the two admitted facts, that even in the sons of God, original depravity still exists, and that Satan is peculiarly active in tempting them to fall if possible, and to bring reproach on the cause of Christ. Nor do I know of any class of men who are more exposed to danger from both these sources, than missionaries to the heathen. In us the remains of sin are less restrained by the influence of Christian

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society and public sentiment, for we are far removed from it, and we are peculiarly exposed to the assaults of the prince of darkness, who watches all his outposts with vigilance, and is ever ready to annoy those who make inroads on his long held dominions.

More particularly. It may be remarked, that offences arise among Christians:—

1. From the weakness and follies of those who profess the name of Christ. Christians are but men, and it is one of the characteristics of our religion, that the poor and the ignoble, the despised of men, the weak and base ones of this world are among the first to embrace it. On such the men of this world naturally look down with scorn, and it would be no matter of wonder if they were to take offence at them, even without any due cause being given. In so far as the weaknesses and follies of Christians might have been avoided, it is their fault, if by their means, offences come.

2. A prolific source of offences from the church is found in the want of entire union and harmony among its members. It was with prophetic foresight of the evils hence arising, that Christ Jesus insisted so much on the necessity of union, and the duty of love, in his last address to his disciples. Love was a distinguishing peculiarity of the church in its youthful days, but alas, in our times, *the love of many has waxed cold*, and hence offences innumerable have arisen.

The causes of discord among Christians are various, and to enumerate them all would be tedious. I shall therefore speak only of those which are likely to affect ourselves as missionaries, and which, unless we are extremely careful, will sow the seeds of most unpleasant feeling, and cause grievous offences to arise in the prosecution of our work.

We were once all strangers to each other. Our birth-places were different; the societies in which we grew up were different; the modes of thinking, and views of things, which almost unconsciously we have imbibed are different; our habits are different; our educations have been different. It is to be expected, therefore, that the views we shall form as to many of the details of our duty in this land will be very different. True, the same work is before us all,—but we all look at it in different aspects. We are each of us sufficiently attached to our own opinions, to feel very reluctant to give them up, especially on the representations of

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others, who have perhaps but little, if any better opportunity of judging than ourselves. Yet we cannot all have our own way—there must be concession if we work together. If there be no conciliating spirit—if there be no disposition to yield, even where perhaps we may at times be in the right—if each one perseveres in maintaining his own opinion, regardless of the experience, the counsels, or the wishes of others, then my brethren, it requires no spirit of prophecy to foresee that there will be roots of bitterness springing up among us, and troubling us. Then, indeed, it must be that offences will come.

Again, some Christians are weak and easily offended. There are some who are suspicious, and take offence where none was intended, and where none could be justly inferred. In such cases, the person who is offended, is in reality, the one who does the wrong, and must bear the blame of the evil that occurs. There are Christians whose unkind judgments of their fellow Christians—whose ill-temper and peevishness are constantly creating uneasiness and discord, and causing offences to come. There are some Christians who, by rash and thoughtless remarks, by foolish jesting, and general levity of behavior, offend, and cause others to offend. Think not that in making these remarks, I mean to intimate that I am not liable to the same charges. I speak of them because I have but too often found in myself the same errors and sins against which I would now warn you. In reference to all things that may cause discord among brethren, the words of the apostle are peculiarly applicable, *Let us not judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way*, Rom. xiv. 13, and also, *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves*, Rom. xv. 1.

3. But the cause, which perhaps, above all others, makes offences to arise in the church, is a proud disposition and high esteem of one's self. Contests for the pre-eminence are as common and as injurious in the church of Christ as anywhere else. Some will admit no superior, even where they have little or no claim to the superiority themselves. Sorry am I to say it, but I have heard more than one missionary to the heathen, say, "I am determined to stand in the first rank," "I will not submit to be ruled by another;" and though my conscience reproved me for the harsh judgment, yet I could scarcely resist the belief that this was the feeling of others, who did not acknowledge it so frankly.

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Oh brethren, this is not the principle, on which the soldiers in Christ's army must act. We cannot all be captains and leaders in this warfare. There must be some to lead the front, and some to bring up the rear. There must be some to give directions, and others to obey. There must be some to stand in prominent places, and others to lie concealed. The true principle is, to acknowledge superiority wherever it exists—nay, more than this, it is, *in honor to prefer one another*, Rom. xii. 10, *in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves*, Phil. ii. 3. Yea, my brethren, *humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.* What matters it, if in this world you do not receive your due meed of applause, if men do not think of you as you deserve? perform your duty *and in due time God shall lift you up*, 1 Pet. v. 5.

Oh this pride is a dreadful thing. Most of the quarrels and offences in the church have their origin in pride. By our vanity, our obstinate self-preference, our pertinacious self-seeking, we offend others. They are perhaps too proud to seek reparation, or we are too proud to give it when asked. Who could have supposed, if not taught it by experience, that vain-glory, and seeking for worldly honor, could have found room for their exercise in the church of Christ? If there is sorrow in heaven, surely angels must weep over this. If there is joy in hell, surely Satan must rejoice in it.

In all these ways—the weakness and follies of Christians—the want of union and harmony among them, and the effects of pride and ambition, it must needs be, that offences will come. Little does any one know of the world who has not observed, that these are the standing objections to religion—the common grounds on which men reject the gospel. Were it not for these offences, and such as these, it is but little that the enemies of the church could do or say against her.

II. Let us consider, secondly, the words, *woe unto the world, because of offences.*

The condition of the world is bad enough, even when left to itself. It lies under the power of Satan, who as a strong man armed, keepeth his house, and his goods are in peace. The world has no will, and it has no wish to be delivered from his power. But when to all this is superadded the evil arising from the offences of the church, Woe, woe unto the world, because of offences. By these the eyes of the world, naturally blinded, are turned away from the light. By these the man who was already

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sinking in the mire, is plunged yet more deeply into it. Through the church comes the only hope of the world. But the offences of the church, cause her to lose her influence, and weaken her strength; thus she enters on the contest for her Master at a great disadvantage. What must the Canaanite and the Perrizite who dwelt in the land, have thought of Abraham and Lot, and the God they worshipped, when the herdsmen of these brethren quarreled? Gen. xiii. 7. Because the sons of Eli were sons of Belial, *men abhorred the offering of the Lord.* Nay, more than this. These men, who should most strenuously have stood up for the honor of God, were the very ones who made *the Lord's people to transgress*, 1 Sam. ii. 17, 24. When David sinned his great sin, he gave *great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, 2 Sam. xii. 14. Oh how often must we hold down our heads with shame, when God's people offend. The offence does not stop with them. Christians are so united together, that if one suffers, all suffer—if one acts imprudently the offence is charged on all. Thus men's hearts are hardened against the gospel. Thus the beginnings of convictions for sins are quenched—thus men who were inquiring the way to Zion are disgusted, and turn back to the ruin of their souls. Thus the name of God is dishonored, Rom. ii. 24, and the way of truth is evil spoken of, 2 Pet. ii. 2. Alas, there be many now in hell who have been driven there by the sins of professing Christians, and there be many more who might have gone to heaven, had not the way been blocked up by the offences of those who should rather have taken the stumbling-blocks out of the way. Pitiable truly is the state of the world, when offences arise in the church. It is as though some great conflagration were destroying the city, and the various companies of firemen, instead of uniting their force to extinguish it, should waste their strength and time in contests with each other; or in adding fuel to the flames, which they sought to quell. *Woe unto the world because of offences.*

III. *Woe (also) to that man by whom the offence cometh!* It is no light matter to stand in the way of any man's salvation. It is no light thing to have the blood of any man found in your skirts. It is no light matter to have, by your offences, impeded the progress of the gospel. If you are really a child of God, you may be saved, notwithstanding by your weakness, or folly, or want of brotherly love, or sinful ambition and self-seeking, you may have caused an offence to come—but if saved, it will be *so as by fire*,

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1 Cor. iii. 15. God may grant you repentance, and pardon, but it will be with marks of his displeasure that you will not soon forget. Because of the offence of David, the sword did never depart from his house, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Because of the offence of the Corinthians touching the Lord's Supper, many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept, 1 Cor. xi. 30.

Do not understand me as saying, that if a child of God offends, he will certainly be visited with outward judgments. A woe may be inflicted on him, unseen by men, and unfelt for the time by himself, and yet far more severe than any outward judgment. The Lord may send leanness and barrenness on your soul on earth, and in the other world, through your offences, your seat in glory may be far lower than it would otherwise have been. And if there can be sorrow in heaven, with how much sorrow will you look back to the offences of which on earth you were guilty, and by which you may have injured the cause of a God so good, and a Father so kind, as is our Father in heaven.

If you are a professor of religion, but not a true child of God, and offences come by you—woe, woe unto you! And remember, in proportion to the frequency and magnitude of your offences, will be the evidence that you are not a Christian. It is bad enough to be a false professor. It is ruin enough to have the form without the power of godliness; but to add offences which injure the body of Christ to all this, oh it is terrible beyond the power of language to express. *The Son of man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*, Matt. xiii. 41, 42. *It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto that man through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves*, Luke xvii. 1–3.

In the practical application of this subject, I may remark,

I. Learn, hence, to avoid all such as give offence, so far as lies in your power. We are prone enough to give offence in ourselves, without unnecessarily associating with those who may still more lead us astray. *Now, I beseech you, brethren*, says the apostle Paul, *mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them*, Rom. xvi. 17. Yea, he says in another place, *Now we command you, brethren, in*

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the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly. Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed, 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14. This, it is to be remembered, is only an extreme measure. Our first duty, in case of an offence on the part of a Christian brother, is to go and tell him of his fault alone. If this prove ineffectual, then take two or three others, and remonstrate. If he persist, then withdraw thyself. Such is our duty, fellow-Christians, and were there more faithfulness in performing it, there would fewer offences come.

2. If you would learn how to avoid giving offence, study carefully the example of the apostle Paul. In the 1 Cor. viii. 13, he says, *If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* A most prolific source of offences, is the pertinacious standing up for our own rights, in all cases. To decide when we should maintain our cause, and when we should suffer wrong, is a difficult thing. No uniform rule can be laid down; but in general a careful adherence to the apostle's rule will secure the object we desire. *Give none offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved*, 1 Cor. x. 32, 33. Be ye, therefore, followers of the apostle. Let his burning love for souls, and his flaming zeal for God, possess your hearts, and you shall be in little danger of exposing yourselves to the woe denounced in the text.

3. Finally. *It must needs be that offences will come.* Do not, therefore, expect that none will trouble you. Do not be disappointed, grieved, or discouraged, if they arise to disturb you in your labors. Lay your plans in reference to them, and prepare your minds to bear them in a Christian spirit when they come. They will come. Only see to it, that you be not the offenders. Keep yourselves clear, and when they do come, do not aggravate them; but, on the contrary, do all in your power to remove them, and prevent their evil consequences. *Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

NINGPO, May 11, 1845.

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SERMON XLI.

PREACHING TO THE GENTILES.

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus, my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went thence into Macedonia. Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity: but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.—2 Cor. ii. 12–17.

It was during Paul's first visit to Europe, after he had been to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Athens, that he visited the wealthy and luxurious city of Corinth. Yet dissolute, even to a proverb, as were the manners and character of the people, God informed him that he had much people there, and the apostle in consequence remained more than a year and a half. During this long residence he became much acquainted with the people, and deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of his converts. Leaving them, he departed to Syria and Jerusalem, and then came to Ephesus, where he remained more than two years. During this time, the church at Corinth, surrounded with all the wickedness of a city, whose very religion was debauchery, became sadly infected with the spirit of the place, and relapsed into the vices from which they had so recently been washed. God might have said to Paul, as he once said to Moses respecting Israel, *This people whom thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, have quickly corrupted themselves*, Exod. xxxii. 7, 8. In consequence of this, the apostle wrote them his first Epistle, in which he very severely reproves their evil courses. It was written from Ephesus, shortly before the tumult excited there by Demetrius, the silversmith, 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9, and such was the apostle's anxiety respecting them, that, either at the same time or very shortly after, he sent

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Titus to inquire concerning their state, and bring him word. Shortly after the first Epistle to the Corinthians was written, the riot occurred at Ephesus, which made it necessary for the apostle to leave that place, Acts xix.

In furtherance of a plan previously formed, he went to Troas, meaning to proceed thence to Macedonia, and thence to Corinth. At Troas he found an open door of usefulness, many were ready to hear the word, and the Lord had prepared the way for him. But such was his anxiety to hear respecting the state of the Corinthian church, that, not finding Titus at Troas, from whom he expected to have heard, he *had no rest in his spirit,* and was constrained to pass by the opened door at Troas, and hasten on to Macedonia. Here, too, he *found no rest.* Titus, it seemed, had not yet returned from Corinth, and in his great anxiety for his spiritual children, and his many cares, he was *troubled on every side; without were fightings, and within were fears,* 2 Cor. vii. 5. But here at length Titus met him, with such accounts from the Corinthian church, as satisfied the apostle's utmost expectations. Under the gratifying effects of this news, he penned this epistle in which he declares himself *comforted, so that he rejoiced the more,* 2 Cor. vii. 6, 7.

The apostle had been deeply anxious for the Corinthian church, and with reason. It was a light set in an important place, he had bestowed much labor there; he had greatly rejoiced in their Christian advancement, and had boasted of them to others. For awhile he was in great distress, for they had backslidden, and he feared lest he had bestowed labor in vain, and should find reason to be ashamed of his confident boasting. But the news by Titus relieved him from these fears, and gave him a new proof that his work being accepted of God would not prove fruitless. Full of these thoughts, he gives hearty thanks to God, who by his means had made himself manifest in so many places. He had gone forth in his missionary work in weakness and fear, and unsupported by human strength or recommendations; but God made him to triumph, and made manifest the savor of the knowledge of himself by his means in every place. *The savor of the knowledge of God,* means the delight, or the spiritual satisfaction arising in the mind of the believer from the perception of the true character of God, and of Jesus Christ. It is that which is referred to in figurative language in the Song of Solomon, where the church says to the Saviour,

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Thy name is as ointment poured forth,
Therefore do the virgins love thee.

Such knowledge is possessed only by those to whom God gives the spiritual understanding to discern it, just as sweet tastes and pleasant perfumes are perceived only by those whose bodily senses are perfect, 1 Cor. ii. 13–15, and unless God gives this spiritual discernment, even Paul will preach in vain. But wherever Paul had preached, God had granted to some, this spiritual understanding, and hence the apostle's gratitude, *Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of the knowledge of himself in every place.*

It has been noted as a characteristic of the apostle Paul, that in his epistles, the use of a word leads to a new and striking train of thought which he pursues for a few sentences to the temporary neglect of the subject immediately in hand. It is so here. Having spoken of the *savor of the knowledge of God*, the word *savor* suggests the *sweet savor* of an acceptable sacrifice, as illustrative of the acceptance with which God received his own services, and the idea is pursued in one or two very striking and solemn sentences. By him, and such as he, the sweet savor of the knowledge of God is made to men, some of whom endued with spiritual tastes receive and delight in it, while others reject it as tasteless and unprofitable. But in either case his services are accepted, and come up as sweetly before God, as the smell of the offering of Noah, when with his saved family he knelt and sacrificed amidst the ruins of a former world. *We are of God* (says the apostle), *a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.*

In every place, God is glorified by the preaching of his word, and his faithful servants are accepted in their ministrations; but let it not be supposed that he is glorified only by the salvation of those that believe, and accepts only the services that end in salvation. There are few places, where at least, some of those who hear the word are not saved; there are no places, where many hearing, are not lost, but in each of these cases, in the salvation of the saint, and the aggravated condemnation of the sinner, the savor of the knowledge of God—his mercy, justice, and holiness —are made known, and the ministrations of his servants come up before him for a sweet savor. But how different are the results, each of which tend to the glory of God, and in each of which his servants are accepted! In the one case, life and im-

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mortal joys are given; in the other, death and deeper damnation ensue. *Life unto life; Death unto death.* Such are the solemn results. Oh, it is a solemn thing to be a minister of God, when such results depend upon our ministry. Well might the apostle exclaim, *And who is sufficient for these things?* who can contemplate unmoved such results following his efforts! How anxious should we be, that it be not our fault that any perish!

In the last verse of the chapter, the apostle returns to the subject from which he had been led off, by the mention of the word *savor*, and gives the reasons why God was pleased to accept of his services in every place. He was accepted of God, because he constantly gave himself with all diligence to his work; and that not as many, who from fear, covetousness, or the love of applause, held back, perverted, or corrupted the word of God; but speaking in the utmost sincerity and openness, so as to challenge examination of his motives, as the messenger of God, as in the very sight and presence of God, and in full dependence on Christ, he delivered his message, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear. *We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.*

Such seems to have been the train of thought in the apostle's mind, when penning the passages to which we are now attending. In speaking farther on it, I desire to call your attention to some of the truths it suggests, particularly under these three heads.

I. The proper character.

II. The unfailing results.

III. The solemn responsibilities of preaching the Gospel.

The words of the apostle had special reference to preaching to the heathen, for he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and was now writing to a church called from the midst of idolaters; and they are peculiarly applicable to us, who either as ordained ministers, or as assistant missionaries, are endeavoring to preach to the heathen. The truths they contain, however, are not for the heathen alone. They are for each of us who has heard the word of Christ.

I. The proper character or style, in which the gospel should be preached to the heathen. We shall not easily find a better description of the proper character of such preaching, than that in the last verse of the chapter before us, and that in several particulars.

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1. *Not corrupting the word of God.* The word *corrupting* (καπηλεύοντες) is taken from the practice of fraudulent venders of wine, and fruits, who mix good and bad articles together to increase their bulk, or make them pass off more readily, themselves aiming at their own profit in what they do, and little regardful of the injury that may accrue to their customers. Now the apostle had a doctrine to preach, very unpalatable, and even loathsome to men's natural taste. *To the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 23. He could very easily have pruned off some of these offensive features. He could very easily have mixed up something of human reason, and human merit, to render it more attractive and palatable. He could very easily have preached circumcision, or the sufficiency of our own righteousness, and thus the offence of the cross would have ceased. But his object was not thus to corrupt the word of God, but to set it forth in its native simplicity and purity. Though it cut like a two-edged sword, though it stirred up the hatred and anger of the natural heart, yet he was not the man to blunt its edge, or make it an instrument to tickle the ears, instead of piercing the hearts of his hearers.

Therefore, brethren, when we preach the word of God to the heathen, let us preach it in its purity. If they are offended, be it so, provided they are offended at the truth, and not at any negligence of ours—at the message, and not at the messenger. Let us not be like the many missionaries of the Roman Catholic church, and others, who, bearing our Master's name, have substituted a baptized idolatry in place of Christianity. Proclaim the whole word of God, and let no heathen superstitions be added with it. If we were to connive at the worship of ancestors, we might induce many to renounce other forms of idolatry. If we were to insist only on good works, and merit, and reward, we should have many more to applaud our doctrine, than if we insist on total depravity, repentance, the new birth, mortification of sin, and the worthlessness of human good deeds. It is not long ago since a native of this place said to me, half angrily, "Why do you talk so much about the heart? Why are you not satisfied to admonish men to do good, and let the heart take care of itself?" There are many doctrines in Christianity, which *the natural man receiveth not*, but they must not therefore be kept back. The pure *word of God, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit*,—such is the message we are to bear to this people. We shall not in-

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crease our own reputation by so doing; we shall not hear them passing hollow compliments, and saying, "It is very good doctrine." We may have to endure opposition, scorn, or, worse than all, *indifference;* but in the midst of it all, be this our first care,—not to corrupt the word of God. *He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces,* Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. Let us fill our own minds with confidence in the word of God. Let us be well satisfied of its power, let it dwell richly in our hearts, and let us give it forth with all purity and force, speaking it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.

2. *Sincerity.* The word εἰλικρίνεια here used denotes that sincerity which will bear examination in the full light of the sun, and the meaning is, that our hearts and motives in all our preaching must be so pure that they will bear the most searching examination not only of other men, or even of our own consciences, but of God himself. What are your motives, brethren, in proclaiming God's word here? or desiring the conversion of any particular person, be it a teacher, a servant, a pupil, or a friend? Is it that you may thereby obtain the credit of his conversion, and have it said of you, such a one is very pious and useful, he has converted so many persons? Is it that you may have it reported at home, that you are doing something among the heathen? Is it that you may have some one who will, being converted, be of more use to yourself and help you on in your studies or plans? Is it because you think you have been laboring so long and so faithfully, that you deserve some such token of God's acceptance? Oh brethren, none of these motives will bear examination, nor will fifty others that might easily be named. The glory of God, the advancement of Christ's kingdom, compassion for perishing souls, sorrow to see them sin against God, these, and such as these, should be the prevailing motives. Honor, ease, or fame, all such selfish, proud, self-aggrandizing motives, as well as a double heart, must be utterly rejected if we would aspire to the character of sincerity.

3. *In the sight of God.* His eye is ever on us, he watches us, he ponders all our ways. How much diligence therefore should we give, that our work may be acceptable to him. If he sees us slothful or loitering in our work, taking our pleasure instead of seeking his glory, not watching for him when he comes, how can

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we be esteemed faithful servants, or enter into his joy? Let us therefore be diligent in our work, remembering the account we must render to him at last.

4. As ambassadors of God and of Christ, and in entire dependence on the power of him who sends us. As his ambassadors we must needs be impressed with the dignity and importance of our work, and speak with authority, yet without pride. We must be affectionate, earnest, solemn, and full of prayer for the blessing of Christ, and the influences of the Holy Spirit to rest on our labors; both as in this imitating the example of Christ, and as knowing that it is only thus we can hope to succeed.

II. *The unfailing results of such preaching.* These results are such as concern ourselves, our hearers, and God.

1. We shall triumph, *thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.* There is an allusion here to the triumphs which the Roman people awarded to their victorious generals. After being out in many a hard-fought battle-field, after much exposure to hunger and storm and peril, the soldier gained the victory, and returned to his native city to receive the honors and rewards its gratitude awarded. Proudly showing his wounds and scars, and displaying the spoils of the enemy, the trophies of battle, and the captives who followed in his train, he was carried along in triumph through the streets of the imperial city. Even so, but far more glorious, and far purer shall be the triumph of the faithful soldiers of Christ. Here, then, life is a warfare, hard and dangerous, and at times the victory seems unattainable. But through him who strengtheneth us, we shall overcome every enemy, and in due season God will cause us to ride upon the horses and chariots of salvation, and dwell, with the crowns and the palm-wreaths of victory, in the everlasting city, whose name is *Jehovah Shamnah, the Lord is there.* Is not this assured hope a sufficient motive to thankfulness and perseverance?

2. The results as they concern our hearers are two-fold, *Some will hear and live—some will hear and die.* It will probably produce both of these results; it will certainly produce at least one of them. Every sermon faithfully preached will accomplish something. *The word shall not return void. It shall accomplish what God pleases, and prosper in that whereto he has sent it,* Is. lv. 11. Some will hear and be saved. "Life unto life!" How glorious is the prospect this short sentence opens to us! On earth there is life, and all life is beautiful. There is the life of the tender

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grass, and the oak; the bloom of the flower, and the refreshing greenness of the leaf. There is the life of the animal, the sportiveness of the young, and the usefulness of the full-grown; and there is the life of the natural man, and the play of the social feelings, and the busy hum of multitudes. But there is another life of man than this. It is the life of the soul, born of the Spirit under the preaching of the word, and nourished by its sincere milk. This is a life that cannot die. It advances, though by slow and painful steps on earth, but with an amazing bound it enters heaven. There it is like a new life. It is *life unto life.* Like the change from the sluggish caterpillar to the butterfly, such is the change from life on earth to life in heaven. But its upward progress does not cease when it enters heaven. There it is ever expanding in intellect, affections, and holiness, and by such rapid degrees, that each degree will seem like added life. *Life unto life!* Christian, look up, far up to the blissful regions on high, and contemplate the unfading glories of that state of endless progression. *Life unto life!* There is no death there, but ever onward and upward, and nearer to God the fountain of all life. How glorious is the Christian's hope, and how glorious is this result of the preacher's work! Brethren! one soul saved by our means from among the heathen, will more than repay all our toils on their behalf.

But there is another side to the picture, another prospect for us to contemplate. Many will hear and be lost, and the result in their case will be, *Death unto death.* They would have been lost if we had not preached; we offered them mercy, they refused, and now *Death unto death.* There is death on the earth, and all death is sorrowful. The fading and scattered flower, the prostrate oak, the withered leaf, the neglected skeleton of an animal, and this frame, so *fearfully and wonderfully made*, deprived of its life, a mass of corruption, or a heap of bones. No wonder there is sorrow in the world when death comes. But there is a death more terrible than all this. The soul, too, can die. The death of the body transmits the unregenerate soul to the second, the unending death. It is *death unto death;* and even as the years of eternity roll on, its capacities are enlarged, and its sufferings are more acute. Oh, sinner! look down into the yawning gulf that awaits you, if you continue impenitent. There is no life there, but anguish and remorse, and despair; yea, from misery to misery—from despair unto despair—from *death unto death*, and that

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forever and ever. May God grant that none of us shall ever experience this dreadful end!

This, too, is one of the solemn results of our ministry; and in this, too, God is glorified, and his justice and slighted mercy are avenged. Therefore, even in the case of those who are lost, we are unto God a sweet savor, though it be a *savor of death unto death.*

III. *The solemn responsibilities of our work.* Now because these things are so, we see what are our responsibilities. These are solemn results, and upon our faithfulness, oh how much depends. "Take care!" was the counsel given to an artist. "Take care! you are working for eternity!" We too are working for eternity. Even if faithful, how can we ourselves bear such a responsibility? *Who is sufficient for these things?* But if not faithful—if we do the work of the Lord with but half an heart, what shall be said to us? If we had not come and spoken to this people, they would have perished; but if we come and speak unfaithfully, they will more surely perish. Better would it be, we had not come at all, than to come and cumber the ground, or close the door against more faithful laborers, and if in addition to being ourselves unfruitful, and mere cumberers of the ground, we become *stumbling-blocks*, woe! woe unto us! It was to his own disciples that Christ said, *Woe unto the world because of offences! It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh*, Matt. xviii. 7.

If we would rightly bear these responsibilities, if in either result of our ministry, we would be accepted of God, then must we imitate the apostle, and perform all our works in Christ's name, and in reliance on his grace to forgive, and his merits to accept. *We are unto God*, says the apostle, *a sweet savor in Christ.* To him then let us come. Let us daily renew our union and communion with him. Baptized with his Spirit—the Spirit of real compassion and love—let us go forth to our work among this people. Supported by his *sufficient grace*, let us persevere to the end of our course. And at the last relying on his merits, and protected by the atonement he has made, we shall stand accepted, and our work approved in the sight of God.

Inference 1. Diligence, much prayer, and compassion for souls are indispensable qualifications of a missionary. Who can consider that such results are likely to follow his ministry, and remain unmoved. If moved to pity, he must needs pray, and sincere prayer will result in diligent action.

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2. Faithfulness and courage are no less necessary, for we must lay open the whole heart of man in all its wickedness, and the whole law of God in all its truth and plainness. This will excite much odium, especially here, where the rules of politeness allow and require a man to gloss over any and every unpalatable truth.

3. We must learn not to be discouraged at the partial success that attends our efforts, or to measure our usefulness only by the number of converts. It is most probable that success, at least to a degree, will attend our efforts, and it should be expected, and prayed for. But bear also in mind that Elijah thought himself entirely unsuccessful, and that God may not be pleased to show us how much we have accomplished. Let us learn such submission to the will of God, as to be willing to labor on without apparent success, if it be his holy will. But beware of resting on the secret purposes of God, and making our conjectures of what they may be, the rule of our duty. It is our part to labor after the conversion of souls, and if we are faithful we shall probably see it. At all events, let us measure our faithfulness by the word of God, and not by any such standard as the number of converts, or the opinion of men.

4. Compassion for souls, and earnest desire for their salvation and advancement in holiness, are equally indispensable. Look at the case of the apostle Paul, who found no rest, when he feared his children were not walking in the truth, and who had no greater joy than in the conversion of souls. What are our feelings on this point?

5. Finally, whatever is done, whatever is hoped for, let it all be in and through Jesus Christ.

NINGPO, February 2, 1846.

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SERMON XLII.

REPENTANCE.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.—Acts ii. 38, 39.

THESE words form the conclusion of the first sermon preached by the apostles of Christ in the Christian dispensation. The preacher was Peter, and others, the apostles who had seen the Saviour both before and after his resurrection; the theme was Christ, and him crucified, and the Holy Spirit was present by his miraculous gifts, but above all by his converting grace to apply the truth to the hearers' hearts. The hearers were of the number of those who, but a few weeks before, had joined in the furious cry, *Away with him! away with him! Crucify him! crucify him!* But now a change came over the spirit of their minds, and deeply impressed, and pricked in their hearts, the cry burst from three thousand lips, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

It is a remarkable fact, that, in cases of conviction of sin, and conversion to God, this is always one of the first questions that is asked. Be the convicted person a heathen, or a nominal Christian—let him in his former life have been well instructed, or profoundly ignorant of the truths of Christianity—when once the Spirit of God awakens him from his death-like slumber, he is obliged to ask the way to Zion. Like the man long wandering and bewildered in a forest, when he at last comes to the right path, he knows not in what direction to shape his course, and must needs inquire of others the way of safety. With the letter of God's word he may have been familiar enough, but its spiritual meaning, the natural man, and the natural understanding perceiveth not, and when the Spirit of God begins to open his eyes,

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he sees how little he understood before. The question also implies a hearty desire to know and to do the will of God, whatever it be, in order to obtain the salvation of their souls. So when Paul was struck down by the brightness above the brightness of the sun, and heard the voice of Jesus whom he persecuted, reproving his sinful and dangerous course, then, *trembling and astonished, he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6.

This is a question, for which an answer must and will be found. There is no man, whose eyes are opened to see the wrath of God as it is revealed against sin, and who feels that, for his sin, he is in danger of sinking to the bottomless pit of perdition, who will not seek some way of escape. There is no man who can, unmoved, look down into the yawning gulf that opens to receive the sinner, and feels that such may be his portion, too, who will not endeavor to avoid the impending ruin. But here a danger, scarcely less great than the one he seeks to avoid, is but too apt to befall the inquiring soul. *Many false prophets are gone out into the world*, and by them, thousands who have been led to ask, *What must we do to be saved?* have been deceived, and pointed into courses of action, and ways of escape, which, in the end, do but involve them in deeper, and more irremediable woe. It is the interest of Satan, our great adversary, that such deceit should be practised, and the native sinfulness of our own hearts renders us but too liable to fall into the snare. If, therefore, my hearers, any of you are now asking, or have ever asked, *What must we do to be saved?* grant me, I pray you, your careful attention, whilst considering the answer which Peter gave to the question. His answer is full both of instruction for the ignorant, and encouragement for the anxious, the very classes by whom the great question is commonly asked,—and what may be further said in this discourse, will be under the two heads: 1. The instructive command; 2. The cheering promise, which he addressed to his hearers on the day of Pentecost, and which are equally addressed to us, who, in these ends of the earth, are met on this Sabbath day to hear the word of God.

1. The instructive command of the apostle, *Repent, and be baptized.* There is no command of Scripture of more universal application than this. There were times and places when God saw fit to wink at the wickedness of those who had not the law of God, *but now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent*, Acts xvii. 30. I am aware that some men think it an antiquated doc-

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trine. It is indeed old, as old as the first transgression in Eden, did we think fit to trace it so far back; but it is sufficient at present to remark, that it formed the burden of the discourses of John the Baptist, when speaking to those who, like ourselves, enjoyed every external privilege. *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance*, Matt. iii. 2, 8, 11. This, too, formed the burden of the first sermon of a greater than John the Baptist—him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did speak—even of Jesus of Nazareth. *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iv. 17. In his last command to his disciples, he gave orders that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, Luke xxiv. 47. I know not how its importance or necessity could be more solemnly enforced, than it was by our Saviour, when he said to the Jews, *Think ye that these men were sinners above all men, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay! but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 1–5. It was the burden of the apostle's preaching everywhere. What Paul said to the Ephesians, that he had *testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xx. 21—that might all the apostles, in their sphere, and every faithful minister of Christ down to our days, say too. Never has a sinner from our world entered heaven, who did not begin his course by repentance. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, Luke xv. 10, and till the world shall end, none shall be saved who does not repent. The doctrine, therefore, is as old as the first sin in Eden, it is as permanent and firm as the word of God itself, and heaven and earth shall pass away, ere it becomes an antiquated or a useless story.

But, I think I hear some of my hearers say, What is this marvellous doctrine of which such things are said, and to which so much importance is attached? On this point there are many mistakes, and it is easy to err. I may say in a few words, that repentance does not consist in penances, bodily austerities and mortification, or fasting. It is not a gloomy face. It is not asceticism, or morose renunciation of the world, or bitter declamation against its follies and immoralities. It does not consist in a formal confession of sin and ill-desert, such as is daily made by

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thousands, who are like the man spoken of by the apostle James, who, *beholding his natural face in a glass, goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was*, James i. 24. Nor does it consist in that fear and hatred of sin, which many have, when they find themselves either actually suffering for it, or apprehensive of incurring God's everlasting vengeance. The repentance from fear of punishment alone, is but the fear and the hatred of crime which the criminal has when the halter is round his neck; but as soon as you release him he plunges into his follies and crimes as eagerly as ever. True repentance, I repeat it, is something very different from all this. The Greek word μετανοια, by which it is expressed in the New Testament, signifies *a change of mind*—an alteration of the ruling passions, desires and affections of the soul, so that what was once chiefly sought after, the world and its vain delights, loses its charms; and what was once postponed and neglected, God, his righteousness, and service, take the first place, and receive the principal attention. This is a mighty change to be wrought in a sinner's heart, and deserves a more particular attention.

I remark then further, that repentance consists in *a true sense of sin*. On nothing is there more misapprehension among men, than in regard to the nature of sin. This would be really wonderful, had not the apostles warned us of *the deceitfulness of sin*, and the craft of Satan, who often shows himself as *an angel of light*, so that men are utterly blinded as to its true nature. Sin does not consist only or chiefly in outward actions. The deeds of which it is a shame even to speak; the profane language which gentlemen do not use, and the trick and meannesses which honest men despise; these are bad enough, but these are only the fruits of sin, which proceed from the evil heart that every man has and the *sin that dwelleth in us*. God's restraining providence, the influence of society, or the force of early education, may restrain a man from these, and his outward deportment may be in the main blameless, while from his heart a holy God turns away from him. Which of you, my hearers, would be willing to unfold before this little audience, all the secret thoughts and imaginations of your hearts, even for one single day? Who is there that would tell to his dearest friend the whole history of his soul? But remember God sees and knows it all, and what think you must be the feelings of him who is of *purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, at the spectacle which he every day beholds in every

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human breast? The seat of sin is in the heart, which the prophet Jeremiah tells us, *is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. *Every imagination is only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5. This wickedness commences at the earliest period possible, nay, in the words of the inspired Psalmist, *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*, Ps. li. 5. Sin in its own nature is the worst thing in the universe; it is that *abominable thing which God hateth;* but how much greater is its aggravation, when we reflect, that all sin, even our sins against our fellow-men, are yet more directly against God, that God who created, who watches over and does us good? *Against thee, thee only have I sinned*, Ps. li. 4. In our case too, my hearers, it is worse than the sin of the heathen around us, for we sin against the clear word of God, which we have had from our infancy, and the unspeakable grace of Christ which has been made known unto us. Oh *look upon him whom you have pierced, and mourn.* Whatever we may think of sin, it was no light matter to Christ, when for our sins, he poured out his blood, and offered up his life, as a sacrifice to God.

Sin also defiles the soul. The various penances and purifications of the Levitical law, were all intended to show its defiling nature. It unfits man for communion and intercourse with his Creator. I know that to us, who are accustomed to live away from God, and to think of him as one very far off from us, this may seem a small thing, a light evil; but it did not seem so to Adam, when in the days of his innocence he walked unconscious of shame in the garden of Eden. How soon did he hide himself from the face of God, when by sin he had forfeited his favor, and rendered himself unworthy of the high privilege of being *a son of God?*

Sin, too, hath a dreadful punishment in reserve. *God is angry with the wicked every day*, Ps. vii. 11. He may not manifest his anger at once, but his wrath is not therefore the less certain. His justice and his holiness alike demand its punishment, and in due season it will come, *For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it*, Is. xxx. 33.

The sinner who is truly convicted and repents of his sin, is to some extent aware of these truths, and they cannot but fill his mind with uneasiness. I pretend not to say how much sorrow, or how deep distress any man must feel in repentance for sin, but

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I would give very little for that religion that does not commence in sorrow, or for that experience that is not ready to pray with the Psalmist, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*, Ps. cxliii. 2.

But true repentance consists not simply in sorrow and fear. It is joined to an "apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ." The convicted sinner is deeply impressed with the sense of his own sinfulness, ill-deserts, and utter helplessness; he also sees that his sins have helped to nail our Saviour to his cross, and this conviction fills him with more sorrow than anything else; but while thus sorrowing and repenting he also sees that that crucified Lord is able to save him from the power and dominion of his sins, that the object of his sufferings and death was to provide an atonement for men, and that, *there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared*, Ps. cvii. 7. This sense of the evil of sin, and of the mercy of Christ, which has provided a ransom and a way of escape for the sinner, fills his heart with grief and hatred of his sin. He loathes himself for it, he hates all sin. He wonders at the love of Christ which can pardon, and the wisdom and grace which found the means of doing so. There is no sin he does not abhor, and herein is one of the surest tests of the sincerity and genuineness of your repentance. If there be some sin, some little evil, which you are not willing to abandon—if there be some one point on which you still wish to adhere to the world, and gratify your natural self—your repentance is not genuine. True repentance hates sin because it is sin, and though you were willing to give up every other sin, yet if there be some darling lust, some one evil thing which you are unwilling to abandon, then my beloved hearer, I must say unto you, you do not really hate sin. You do not really desire to be freed from it. Your repentance is not genuine, *and except you repent, you must perish.* Call not this an hard saying. It was Christ himself who said, *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*, Luke xiv. 33. Christ must save you from all your sins, or he will save you from none at all. Christ must make you perfectly holy, or your portion must be with those that are without, for into the holy city *there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth or worketh abomination*, Rev. xxi. 27. Hence observe the force of the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, *Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this self-same thing that ye sorrowed*

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after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. As the sinner who truly repents, thus grieves for, and hates his sins, so does he turn from them with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience. As he has given himself in times past as the servant of sin, so does he desire to give himself in time to come, as the servant of holiness. If like the apostle Paul, in earlier life he has been pre-eminent in sin, like the apostle Paul, in later life he should be the more earnest in the service of Him who pardons, and saves him from his sin. The service of God is naturally distasteful and irksome to men, but the change that comes over the repenting sinner is so great, that it becomes his greatest delight. Repentance is indeed but another word for a new creation—for as already remarked, the original word μετανοια imports nothing less than an entire change of the whole current of the thoughts, affections, and desires of the soul.

Being thus changed, the disciple of Christ cannot desire to remain in his old ways of sin. He therefore comes out from the world and separates himself. This is implied in his obedience to the command of the apostle, which forms the next subject for our consideration. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.* To be baptized into the name of any one, is to profess friendship and obedience to him; to be baptized in the name of Christ is to be admitted into the church of Christ. The application of water to the body in baptism signifies the cleansing of the sins of the soul by the Spirit and the blood of Christ. We are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to signify our engrafting into Christ, our partaking of the benefits of the new covenant and our engagement to be the Lord's. And these commands to repent and be baptized, are, as already remarked, binding on every child of Adam, who has any wish, or hope to enter heaven.

Here it may be proper to guard against two mistakes which men are very apt to fall into, that repentance is to be exercised only once in the course of a man's life, and that the exercises of the heart in repentance and conversion are always the same in kind, order, and degree, in every person who is brought to God. There is a vast variety in the experience of those to whom God shows his saving grace, and my object in the preceding state-

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ments, has been more to point out what is essential than to define the degree, or order in which they occur. In some the exercises of the mind will be much more clear and pungent than in others. They may more rapidly result in conversion in some cases, than in others; they may be much more clearly perceived by some, and may show their effects in the outward actions, with more or less distinctness. For all these varying degrees of intensity, no certain or definite rule can be laid down. There can be but one regeneration of the soul, but sorrow for sin may be, nay must be, often felt. It is indeed commonly felt much more deeply after conversion than before, and he who best knows his own heart, or most narrowly examines his own life, will find the most abundant reason to humble himself before God for his offences, and shortcomings. As it is well said in the prophecy of Jeremiah, *Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth*, Jer. xxxi. 19.

The object that the apostle exhorts us to gain by repentance, and baptism, is the remission of our sins. Let it not be supposed, that this great blessing is purchased by repentance. Many seem to think that a little sorrow for sin is all that is necessary to induce God to pardon us; but the Bible teaches a far different doctrine. By the law of Moses there was *no remission without the shedding of blood;* and there is no pardon of sin, except in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. It is because he hath suffered, *the just for the unjust*, that God *can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth on Jesus*, Rom. iii. 26. Repentance therefore does not purchase our pardon. *Thousands of rams, ten thousands of rivers of oil for sacrifices, your first-born for your transgression, and the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul*, Mich. vi. 7, would not secure for you the favor of God, nor anything save the one offering and perfect sacrifice of Christ. But repentance is necessary in its own nature, for having so grievously offended, it is right that we should be sorry. The returning prodigal is received by his anxious father, not because of his repentance, but because of his father's love and compassion; but this so far from rendering his repentance unnecessary, only makes it the more needful and proper. Shall we sin against so gracious a God as Jehovah—so merciful a Saviour as Christ—so holy a Spirit as the Comforter, and yet feel no emotions of sorrow, of childlike sorrow, when the love of

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God is confirmed to us, notwithstanding our sins? Perish the unworthy thought.

"Lord, we have long abused thy love,
Too long indulged our sin,
Our aching hearts e'en bleed to see
What rebels we have been."

Baptism too, on which so many rely, for their pardon and acceptance with God, is indeed of the utmost importance, for it is commanded by God, but in itself, it is only the outward seal, and possesses no virtue to save us. What is the use of the outward seal, when the inward grace was wanting? Or what would you value the most curious or costly seal, if it sealed nothing? Such alas, is the baptism of too many.

So much has already been said, of the instructive command of the apostles, to repent and be baptized, that it leaves little space or time to enlarge on the cheering promise that was spoken at the same time; but it is the less necessary to speak at length of this, for if you could only be induced to obey the command, your own experience would teach you more of the sweetness of the promise, than men can tell you. What I have further to say, will therefore be very brief.

II. The promise of Peter to those who should repent and be baptized, 'was, that they should *receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* We shall not greatly err if we say, that next to the gift of the Son of God, who gave his own life for us, the Bible contains no more precious promise than the one before us. I know not indeed how to make a comparison between the two, for in the Christian dispensation, each is equally indispensable. In vain had been the death of Christ were the Spirit not given to apply and seal to us the benefits purchased by this costly sacrifice. In the promise of the Holy Spirit the apostle doubtless had a reference to the miraculous powers, and the gift of tongues, which were bestowed on the early Christians. But it is a great mistake to suppose that these were the chief or most important things intended by this gift. There were those to whom they were granted, who could both work miracles, and speak with tongues, and yet perished after all in unbelief. The gift of the Holy Spirit had respect chiefly to the communication of the salvation of Christ to such as repented and were baptized, and in it are included all the blessings of redemption, and eternal salvation, of which the Holy Spirit is the author to all them that believe.

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The Christian dispensation has been called, and not improperly, the dispensation of the Spirit. He supplies to us the place of the absent Saviour, leads his people into all truth, and fits them for his service and his presence in glory hereafter. It is his work to melt the hardened hearts of men, to foster genuine repentance for sin, to plant faith, and hope, and love in the Christian's breast. It is his work to enable us to bring forth good fruit, to the glory of our Master's name, to give us strength for the performance of every duty, grace for the endurance of every trial, and perseverance unto the end. It is his work to form in our hearts the spirit of adoption, whereby we who are naturally far off from God, and alienated in our minds by wicked works, are enabled to come unto him, and with the confidence of children to cry, Abba, Father! What is there, that the Christian does not owe to, or hope from, the gracious Spirit? Needful for the life of our souls, as the elemental air is for the life of our bodies, were he to withdraw from the world, it would become like those pestilential regions where healthful breezes never blow, or like that sea swept by no wind, where the gallant ship and her crew, and the birds of the air all died, and the waters produced every form of loathsome and hideous reptile. The annals of our world, if they were fully read, present no more melancholy spectacle than that of a soul, abandoned by the Holy Spirit before the day of its departure from the body, and concerning which, even the beloved and compassionate disciple said, *There is a sin which is unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it*, 1 John v. 16.

The apostle confirms the promise just made of the gift of the Holy Spirit, by a reference to the covenant made in ancient times with Abraham, which had special reference to the times of Christ, and the gift of the Spirit. Ye shall receive this gift, says he, because *the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* The promise here referred to, was the one made long before to Abraham, for him, his seed, and all the families of the earth, Gen. xvii. 7, 8. In virtue of that promise, *we*, my hearers, who are not the literal descendants of faithful Abraham, may be made to partake of all the blessings that Abraham, or any of his descendants, ever enjoyed. *If ye be Christ's*, says the apostle Paul, *then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*, Gal. iii. 29.

Fellow-sinners, the blessings of this salvation are offered alike

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to all, and you and I may partake of them, but the word of him who was before all things, by whom all things exist, and who changeth not, has gone forth, that *without holiness, no man shall see the Lord*, and that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* It is therefore no formal or unmeaning question that I am about to put to you, and I pray you in Christ's name, and as you value your own never-dying souls, to answer it honestly and faithfully. Have you repented of your sins? Have you come unto Christ for their pardon? Are you bringing forth fruits meet for repentance? Having been baptized, as most of you have been in infancy, are you now, in adult age, walking worthy of that holy calling, and the profession then made in your name? With these questions, I leave this subject with your own consciences, and pray God to grant his blessing and saving grace with it.

NINGPO, April 12, 1846.

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SERMON XLIII.

THE GRACE OF CHRIST.

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.—2 Cor. viii. 9.

Most of those composing this audience, profess to know something experimentally of the grace of Christ. I trust you do know it. It is not my purpose now to tell you anything new or strange, but rather to lead your minds and my own in a path very familiar to you—to ask you to walk in a road you have often walked before, and to think of things common and well known. But do not misunderstand me, as if I meant to speak of things of little use or importance. They are common, but not trite—familiar, but not to be despised—as needful as the air, and water, and daily bread, which sustain our bodies—like the sun, that day by day shines in the heavens above us—like the heavens above, that daily overshadow, and the earth beneath, that daily supports us—common as all these, but infinitely more glorious and beautiful and grand than they. It is something that ye know in your own experience, something that the humblest Christian, the meanest believer knows, and can discourse of with more true learning than all the sages and philosophers of antiquity; and yet something that the profoundest minds and largest capacities cannot grasp, yea, which glorified spirits and angels excelling in power cannot comprehend; yea, something that God only knows, for *no man knoweth the Son, but the Father*, Matt. xi. 27. And yet *ye* know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, and ye shall be with him forever. Ye are in him now if ye know him at all, and ye shall be with him forever, if ye know him now, for *this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*, John xvii. 3. Oh Christian! *many prophets, and righteous men, and kings have desired to see the things ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things ye hear, and have not heard them. Blessed therefore are your eyes*, Luke x. 23, 24.

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Ye know him, and yet how little a portion of him is known, and the thunder of his power, and the exceeding riches of his grace, and the depth of his love, who can comprehend? It was a beautiful remark of Newton, after all the discoveries by which he enlightened and astonished the world, "I seem to myself to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble, or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me;" but much more truly may the Christian say this of Christ. Oldest and most experienced Christian! who hast long studied the character, and experienced the grace, and felt the love of Christ, what do you know of him? You have been for a year, or five years, or perhaps twenty years, like a man standing on the shores of the ocean. You have seen it in calmness and beauty reposing, either as the morning sun shone over it, or seas of ether and liquid gold seemed blended together at sunset. You have seen it when whitened with foam and lashed by the winds, when clouds and darkness hung over it. You have picked up a shell here, and tried to sound its depths there. You have ventured out a little on its bosom, and come back overwhelmed with the sense of its greatness. Thus you have ever been learning and seeing more of it, and how much do you know of it now? Have you comprehended it all? *Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?* Job xxxviii. 16. How then can ye comprehend him whom the sea willingly owned for its master, and to whom it will one day give up its dead? And yet *ye know him*, and if ye know him aright, ye know the truth of those words of Flavel—"Christ is that ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet, a sea of sweetness, without one drop of gall." Suffer me then to speak to you of him. My words will fall far short of the sublimity of the subject, but let your prayers ascend to God, that he would teach you, and especially, that according to the promise of him of whom we speak, the Holy Spirit may come and take of the things of Christ and show them unto you.

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.

He was rich. There is no comparative or superlative here. Superlative expressions would be worse than useless, for they would imply a comparison with something else, where all comparison is impossible. *He was rich.* What is meant by riches?

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Ask the beggar what it is to be rich, and he will say that you are rich. If I ask you, you will probably point to some of your friends who possess more of this world's goods than yourselves. If I ask them, they will point to some who stand higher than themselves on the dizzy ladder of riches and greatness, or perhaps to Solomon the king of Israel, *who exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom*, 1 Kings x. 23. *But behold, a greater than Solomon is here*, Luke xi. 31. Talk of riches! Why all the wealth of the world could not make Christ rich. What canst thou give unto him? *The cattle upon a thousand hills are his, and his are all the wild beasts of the field, yea, the world and the fulness thereof*, Ps. l. 10–12. Why talk of this little world? If all the grains of sand in this world, and drops of water in the ocean were counted out one by one, the Lord Jesus Christ can point to worlds more numerous than all those grains of sand and drops of water, and *calling the mall by name*, Ps. cxlvii. 4, could say, "All these are mine—their varied treasures are my treasures—their myriads of happy inhabitants are my subjects, and my laws they obey." *Is he not heir of all things? Is he not head over all things to the church?*

But why talk of these material treasures, of riches such as these, that can be weighed in the balance, or measured by the rule? He had other riches and greater treasures than these; and when the disciples brought him food, could say, *I have meat to eat, that ye know not of. All things that the Father hath are his*, John xvi. 15; *for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. *He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. High is his throne—the riches of eternity, of unending time, and unbounded space—yea, the fulness of the Godhead is his. The prayers of contrite hearts are his—the worship of heaven's adoring hosts, and the love of God in which, like some vast ocean, all lesser and meaner objects are swallowed up and lost, all this is his. Riches! How poor and mean are all worldly treasures compared with his! You have heard of fairy tales, and Arabian Nights, which tell of palaces of gold, lighted with gems, and paved with pearls and precious stones; and of wonderful beings who in an instant could rear such structures as mortals could not complete in ages. Why, brethren, all these wonderful tales are very nonsense and folly compared with even the material treasures Christ possesses, and you cannot but feel that the comparison of his better treasures, the

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riches of his grace, with such things as these would degrade them. Well therefore does the apostle say, *He was rich.* If you ever reach that happy world, where his presence renders the light of the sun needless, you will know something of his riches, far more than his servants here can tell you, for he will give you liberally, and without upbraiding, *giving doth not impoverish him.*

How few that are rich will willingly become poor. How few that have once tasted the sweets of power are willing to give them up. How hard it is after indulging in the pleasures and delights of the beautiful palace to descend into the low valley of humiliation, and walk through the valley of the shadow of death! Even for a dear friend it is a great sacrifice to descend to a low station, and exchange a competence or abundance for poverty and want. But our Lord Jesus Christ, the possessor of all glory, and the inheritor of all riches, *became poor.* You ask, how is this possible? I do not know; but we read in his word, how he stripped himself of all his glory—concealed the robes of his divinity in a garment of our inferior clay—abandoned the worship of angels for the society of sinners; and more than all this, was in measure, estranged and separated from the light of his Father's countenance.

He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was formed in fashion as a man, Phil. ii. 7. Brethren, you will never know how great this condescension was. You have some conception of the weakness and littleness of your own bodies, and the feebleness of your own minds, but you have no conception of the greatness and glory of that throne from which he descended, that he might clothe himself in flesh and blood. How can you have? The apostle, in vision, saw a great white throne, and from the face of him that sat upon it the earth and the heavens fled away; but behold, that face is now veiled, and he who sat upon that throne is walking on the earth, to all outward appearance a man compassed with infirmities as others. Fellow-Christians, look upon that meek face and upturned eye, and say, What seest thou there? Alas! *He groweth up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form or comeliness, and when we see him there is no beauty that we should desire him*, Is. liii. 2. Can this be he? Is this the Lord of life and glory? Oh yes. Men saw it not. He came into his own dominions, and his own people received him not, but inanimate nature, the irrational creation, and invisible spirits knew him well. The winds and waves obeyed his voice—the sea grew solid beneath

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his feet. The tree shed its green glories at his word—the fish yielded up its life at his command—the bread multiplied a thousand-fold when he spake; diseases were subject to him—the dead heard his voice and lived. Angels hovered around to minister to him, and devils fled in terror at his presence. When he died the earth was shaken, the rocks rent, and the noon-day sun veiled his face. Creation was anxious to wait upon him. The creature had long been subject to bondage, not willingly, and was groaning for its redemption from the woes our sinful race had inflicted upon it; and now when he came, as if expecting immediate deliverance, all nature was upon the alert to receive his commands, and obey. But not yet. He came not then to be rich, to be honored, to be ministered unto; but to minister, and to give up his life a ransom for many. Gently putting by the eager offers of his creatures, and passing by every form of honor or ease the world contained, he descended to the form and station of a servant, and the meanest of his creatures were better off than he. *Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head*, Matt. viii. 20. Sometimes women ministered unto him; but often he was hungry, often he was thirsty, and often he was weary and faint.

Was not all this bodily want and suffering, joined to the absence of his heavenly glory, enough? Must he descend lower and become poorer still? Yes, he came to raise the meanest of our race to the throne of glory on high, and to do it he must descend below them all. If there was one thing that Christ wished more than another, it was the love and affection of his creatures—that his friends and disciples should love him as he loved them, and love one another as he commanded. His affectionate heart yearned for the sympathy and solace of those he loved. Did he obtain this? Read the history of his life, the jealousies of his chosen followers, their envy of one another, their contests for the pre-eminence, their betrayal, denial, desertion. Yea, fellow-Christian, look into your own heart and read there what he experienced from others. Follow him to the cross, where in the depth of his poverty and sufferings from men, he feels himself forsaken of his God, and say if there was not meaning in the poet's words, of which the poet himself was unconscious when he wrote—

"Poor is the friendless owner of a world."

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A man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs, these were his possessions, these his friends while in the world. It were long to go over the whole story of all that Christ endured, as he became obedient unto death—the death of the cross. Follow him to his grave. Sit down with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, over against his sepulchre. It is a sepulchre given him by charity; the sun has gone down, and besides these few women and his fainting disciples, who thinks of, or cares for him? The inscription on his tomb might have been—Beneath this stone repose the remains of him *who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being formed in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, Phil. ii. 6–8.

Now remember the words of the apostle. *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die*, Rom. v. 7, and ask yourselves, For whom did Christ suffer all this? For himself, he needed not to suffer, or to toil. What could the occupant of that glorious throne, the possessor of those untold riches, expect to gain by enduring all this poverty and sorrow? It was not simply that he wished to increase the number of his subjects, for that he could have done without this labor. God is able out of stones to raise up seed unto Abraham. No, my brethren, it was for your sakes. *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor.*

And who are you, that for your sakes Christ should endure all this? One would naturally suppose, on hearing of all that Christ suffered for others, that they must needs be some very wonderful and deserving beings for whom he was willing to endure so much. One would almost expect some magnificent sun, or brightly beaming star to burst forth, as that for which Christ died; but beheld a worm of the dust, a perishing mortal, a race of sinful men! Christian, what have you to be proud of, or that could merit so much from your Saviour? It is true that Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, were very lovely and glorious creatures, but all their loveliness came from Him, being indeed, but a faint reflection of his own, for in the image of God they were made, and every attribute of beauty they possessed, found its type, or rather its full substance in Him. But you can lay

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claim to no such excellence as they. They speedily fell from their primeval state of innocence and glory, and their children were begotten, not after the image of God, but in the likeness and image of their fallen progenitor, Gen. v. 3. *Ye are the seed of strangers; children of rebels; degenerate plants of a strange vine, and by nature, children of wrath, even as others.* Coming into the world with natures prone to sin, and speaking lies as soon as you were born, you have gone astray each one in his own way. You are fed by his bounty, and supported by his daily providence, and yet you daily forget him, and take the credit of all you possess to yourselves. You are beautified and enriched by his gifts, and yet you deny him due praise for them, or service with them. You slight his calls, you grieve his love, you disbelieve his word, you dishonor his name, and you love and trust in his enemies. Am I saying too much, or charging you too harshly? I would not willingly bring a single charge against you which your own consciences will not acknowledge to be true, and none for which my own heart does not often accuse myself.

Professing a desire to serve him, and to be his, and yet breaking all your vows and professions, and in your most solemn services, and even when on your knees alone with him, yielding your hearts and affections to his great enemy, and suffering your eyes to wander with those of the fool to the end of the earth, you are so full of sin, that you have never yet realized the desperate wickedness of your own hearts, though you know so much of it, that you scarce dare own it to yourselves, and would not dare expose it all to your nearest friend. At the very best you are but unprofitable servants, and are utterly unable to requite your Saviour for the least of all his mercies. All this is true of you, even since you have experienced his grace; but how much more fearfully was it true of you, when the purpose to save you was formed in the Saviour's heart, and when his grace was made known for your salvation. You then were indeed poor and miserable, and blind and naked—yea, so blind and so senseless, that in your folly you not only thought, but said, *We are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing*, Rev. iii. 17. The pit of destruction was yawning to receive you, and with hasty steps you were approaching the brink. One step more and you might have been lost forever. How terrible the lot of those who dwell with devouring fire—with everlasting burnings! Yet that was what you and I deserved, and which, had we been left

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to our own efforts to deliver us, we should surely have experienced, because, from the wrath of God a great ransom could not deliver us, neither riches nor gold, nor all the forces of strength, Job xxxvi. 18, 19.

Thanks be unto God! He hath laid help for us on one mighty to save—for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how, that though he was rich, *for your sakes* he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. Yes, for your sakes, Christ well knew beforehand, all your poverty, and misery, and worthlessness, as well as the sufferings he must undergo if he would deliver you, but he did not therefore shrink from the task. Divine compassion filled his heart. Almighty power nerved his hand, nor did he withdraw that hand until that heart had ceased to beat, and salvation was procured. And what a salvation it was! He was not satisfied simply to deliver you from impending evil. He was not satisfied even to restore you to the state of Adam before he fell. He was satisfied with nothing less than making you *rich*. What shall I say here? How is it possible to describe the things that are in store for them that love God? However poor and miserable and despised they may now be, his word assures to every humble believer such abundant supplies of every good thing, that language fails ere the full sum is told. Among these good things are enumerated mansions in heaven, white raiment, crowns of gold, crowns of glory that fade not away. The tree of life with its refreshing fruit and healing leaves. An exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The true riches, the love and favor of God, the society of angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect; fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore, perfect sanctification, and freedom from all sin and annoyance. Rest, no more sickness and sorrow, and the presence of Christ forever. Whatever it be that you most desire, you shall have it, whatever it be that most annoys and grieves you now, shall be taken away, and lest it should be thought that perhaps some good thing might be withheld, the apostle says, *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. Is not this enough? Do you wish for more? Then hear the apostle John, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. Oh Lord, it is enough! The full heart can desire no more.

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How precious are these promises! and how much more so, when you reflect how they are given to you, by the grace of him who, though he was rich, became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might become rich. Brethren, do ye indeed *know that grace?*

It is *through his poverty*, that ye thus become rich. It was no empty or ostentatious display of compassion, or contempt for sufferings, that led Christ to endure so much. It was from no intention of merely showing how affliction should be borne, that he bore all he did. Heavy as were the strokes, deep as were the sorrows of our Lord, they were all necessary. God's justice demanded satisfaction. His holy and unalterable law cried aloud for revenge; had Christ not borne the punishment, you and I must have bowed our own necks to the stroke, and our endless poverty and misery would have shown how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. It is through the poverty of Christ, that we are spared. Our sins were imputed unto him, our chastisement was laid upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. His righteousness and merits are imputed unto us; by faith we become united unto him, and are made partakers of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the benefits which in this life, and the life to come, do accompany and flow from them.

Now, fellow-Christian, after this brief and most imperfect representation of the meaning of this text, let me ask you, *How much owest thou unto my Lord?* Luke xvi. 5. Do not make the sum of your indebtedness more than it really is. Think over it, calmly and deliberately. What have you received from him? With what have you repaid him? How stands your account? Perhaps it is something like this:—

So many years of life and health.
So much of worldly goods.
So much education and light.
So many kind relatives and friends.
Such a station in society.
So many Sabbaths and sermons.
So many calls of the gospel, and strivings of the Spirit.
So many supplies of grace in times of need.
So many answers to prayers.
So many earnests and foretastes of heaven, and you know how many other things besides.

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On the other hand, what have you to show for yourself?

So many professions of love and service.

So much faithfulness and zeal.

So many opportunities of doing good improved.

So much good done to Christ's people.

So many souls saved—and shall I ask, How many broken vows, forgotten promises, misspent Sabbaths, and neglected opportunities?

Oh! let the grace of Christ fill your heart with wonder and gratitude, while your own deficiencies humble you in the dust. But remember, in your deepest sorrow and humiliation, to bear in mind that the grace of Christ is abundantly able, and that he is abundantly willing to save you, notwithstanding all your sins, and imperfections, and unworthiness, and will do it, too; and therefore, while you take the shame to yourselves, give all glory, and honor, and praise unto him.

If your own defects and unworthiness did not teach you humility, surely the example of Christ should do it. Learn from him not to desire worldly honor or applause, but to follow the path of duty, lead where it may. Seek not great things for yourselves, remembering that the brightest example of the truth of that saying, *before honor is humility*, is found in the life of Christ, who, after his deep sorrow and humiliation, *was highly exalted, and had given to him a name above every other name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess him Lord*, Phil. ii. 9–11. *Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not*, Jer. xlv. 5, but *let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*, Phil. ii. 5.

Finally. Learn, hence, to consecrate yourselves entirely to him. I speak not merely of giving your worldly substance to him, nor even of outward diligence in his service in the spheres in which your lot is cast. God loveth a cheerful giver, and he looketh at the heart far more than at external services. Let your piety be of that deep, earnest, grateful kind, that delights in communion with God, and which shows itself in intercourse with men, without an effort. Out of the abundance of the heart, let your mouth speak. Out of the fulness of your love, let your lives praise him. *If ye love him, keep his commandments.*

NINGPO, June 14, 1846.

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SERMON XLIV.

DEPARTING FROM GOD.

I will arise and go unto my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.—Luke xv. 18, 19.

In nothing is more judgment necessary, than the interpretation of the parables of Christ. They are not so clear and simple as many seem to suppose. They contain the broadest principles and deepest truths of the kingdom of God. Hence was fulfilled in him what was foretold by the prophet, *I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world*, Ps. lxxviii. 2, Matt. xiii. 35. In general there is some one great truth intended to be taught in each parable, while all the circumstances of the narrative are designed to illustrate this truth, and place it in its proper light. It is, so to speak, the *body* of the parable, while the circumstances of the narrative are the *drapery* which surrounds it. The object of the expositor therefore, while paying all due attention to the narrative, should be not to insist too much on the merely accessory and minor details, but to dwell chiefly on the main truth inculcated. This made plain, everything else will naturally assume its proper position, just as when the body stands erect, the garments fall about it in easy and graceful folds, and just proportion, of themselves.

In the parable of the prodigal son, so long the admiration of the church, the theme of painters, and the grateful source of consolation to the weeping penitent, the chief doctrine taught seems to be, *the tender compassion and love of God for the returning penitent.* The particular circumstances by which that love and compassion are shown, are the actions of a father with an erring son. The comparison is a beautiful and striking one, especially when we recollect the words of the Psalmist, *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*, Ps. ciii. 13.

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The truths taught therefore are as simple as they are striking and important. They are,

1. The folly and sin of departing from God, and the way to return.

2. The love and compassion of God to the returning penitent.

3. The displeasure and disdain of the worldly moralist when the vicious are reclaimed.

Although in this parable, the second of these is doubtless the main truth taught, yet the particular verses selected for the text, brings the first chiefly to mind, and to that I invite your attention now. At another time I may continue the subject, and treat of the second and the third in order.

The subject therefore of this discourse is, *The folly, sin and misery of departing from God, and the way to return to him.*

The younger son in the parable, as described by our Saviour may be considered as the type of two classes of persons, for though their characters are widely different, yet they have many circumstances in common, and the description of our Lord seemed to have been designed for each. These two classes are, first, The impenitent and unconverted sinners who have never known the grace of God, second, True believers who backslide. As those who form the second class were once included in the first, I shall speak of each in their order.

1. In regard to all impenitent men, it is strictly true that they are like the younger son in the parable. It is related of him, that after receiving from his father a certain portion of his substance, he went from him into a far country, where, removed from the restraints of parental authority, he gave himself up to all manner of dissipation and excess. So it is with the men of the world. Who is there that receives not good at the hand of God? Who is not dependent on him for every blessing? Endowed by him with a body fearfully and wonderfully made, blessed by him with health and strength both bodily and mental, and watched over by him from the cradle to the grave, what good thing is there that you do not receive from him? It is he who *teacheth man knowledge*, Ps. xciv. 10. It is he who *giveth us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons*, Acts xiv. 17. It is he who raises up friends and helpers. It is he who *giveth the power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 18. It is he who *redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good*

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things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's, Ps. ciii. 4, 5. Under these circumstances how natural does gratitude and a hearty consecration to his service seem, and how appropriately may every man say with David, *All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee; it is all thine own*, 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 16.

But is it so? Do we anywhere witness this consecration to God among men of the world? Alas! no. Men do not like to retain God in their knowledge. They say, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, Job xxi. 14. They seek to forget him, to keep him out of their hearts and affections, nay, even to flee from him. The prodigal's *going into a far country*, is but a type of the distance which natural men seek to place between God and themselves. This distance and strangeness from God is not attained by leaving a Christian land, and forsaking Christian people and Christian ordinances. That would be in vain. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Ps. cxxxix. 7. Heaven and hell are alike sensible to the presence of God. The wings of the morning could not carry you from beyond his presence. The darkness of the night cannot hide you from his eyes. But a man may be very far from God when in the midst of Christians and Christian privileges, and when surrounded by the blaze of his glory he may shut his eyes to it as a blind man's eyes are shut to the sun. Fellow-Christians, you know how possible this is, for you once were in this state. *Ye know the heart of a stranger, for ye were strangers in Egypt*, Exod. xxiii. 9. Let the recollection of it lead you to pity and pray for those who feel it not in themselves. How many such there are! It is sin which separates them from God. *Your iniquities have separated between me and your souls*, Is. lix. 2.

When it is said that by sin men are separated from God, it is not necessarily meant that they are openly and grossly wicked. It is a great mistake to think that God notices chiefly the outward sins that human laws punish, or human good-breeding abhors. God's standard by which he judges and will punish sin, is very different from that of men of the world. Some sins are doubtless more heinous in the sight of God than others, and some vices more odious than others. But it is opportunity and light that constitutes the aggravation of most sins, and doubtless multitudes whose outward life is fair, are more sinful and vile in God's sight, than the despised outcast, on whom the formalist and self-righteous look with unmitigated contempt. The proud Pharisee

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who stood up in the temple, was much farther from God than the publican who *stood afar off*, enduring his scorn, and was probably far more criminal.

Men who are thus destitute of the true knowledge of God and his righteousness are far from him, and there is no saying where their course will end. They go farther and farther astray, and even more incline downwards. They have cast his bands away from them, and were he pleased to withdraw the restraints which his providence places around them, they would run into every excess of riot. Now their object in all this is not so much to despise and provoke God, as it is to seek after happiness. This is that painted toy which allures all men to wander in every crooked path, and sport on the brink of destruction,—but true happiness is never found away from God, and all the searches of the worldly and impenitent man but end in deeper disappointment. The deeper he goes in sin, and the further from God, the deeper he sinks in misery. It may be he is for a while unconscious of his misery, but this only makes it the more certain and intolerable in the end, for his unconsciousness deprives him of the possibility of escaping and obtaining true happiness.

If God has any purposes of mercy to such persons he does not leave them to themselves forever, but in some way convinces them of the impossibility of obtaining true happiness in the way they seek it. They may forget him, but he does not forget them, and one of the means by which he brings them to himself, is by sending afflictions upon them, which show them the vanity of their pursuits. He blasts their hopes of happiness in the world, that they may seek it in himself. A famine happened in the land of the prodigal's sojourning, he began to be in want, and was finally reduced to abject misery and distress, and in his sorrow he remembered the home of his youth, which he had so needlessly forsaken. It is thus also with the convinced sinner. What fruit has he now in the things he has so long sought after? Far from satisfying him, he is more ashamed of them. The arrows of God are in his heart, he finds no comfort in what he once loved, and when he looks forward he has only a certain fearful prospect of judgment before him. He looked around for help, but there is none in himself, none in his former friends, and none in the world. Thus by degrees awakening, he at last *comes to himself*, and sees the vanity of the world. Then he thinks of God and of coming to him,—but at first how unwillingly, he would go any-

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where else if he could. But nowhere else can he go. Therefore he thinks, and recalls to mind how much goodness he has already experienced, and how happy are those who enjoy God's favor. He resolves to return to God, but how can he come to him whose goodness he has so abused? Thus reflecting he sees his own ingratitude and ill-desert, and confesses his unworthiness, nay, more, his just condemnation. Thoroughly humbled by the sense of his own misery and sin, he at last resolves to cast himself on the free goodness of God, and to accept thankfully whatever he may see fit to give. It is seldom that any person ever receives true peace of mind, until brought to this unreserved casting of his whole soul on the sovereign mercy and grace of God. With a trembling heart and faltering step, the now deeply humbled penitent approaches that God he has so long despised and rejected. Do you ask how he is received? Fellow-Christian, you know the door was thrown wide open, you were kindly received, rich gifts were showered upon you, and there was joy in the church on earth, and joy among the angels in heaven. This you know by your own experience, and you will join me in testifying to every inquiring sinner, if there be any such in this house, that if you thus come you shall find the same welcome.

How rich are the blessings laid up in God's house for his people—a covenant is made with them and they become the children of God, while he pledges himself for their protection and defence. In consequence of that covenant every rich blessing is given them—strength to resist temptations and enemies, grace in time of need, foretastes of heaven, right judgments, true laws, good statutes and commandments, rich promises for every state, and some that are seen *only when seen through tears*—the providence of God, like the pillar of fire, and the cloud that led Israel through the wilderness—the good Spirit of God to instruct and to sanctify, and the goodly fellowship of the faithful. All these and many more are among the gifts bestowed upon the returning prodigal, and well may he exclaim, *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage*, Ps. xvi. 6. These joys thus enumerated are all given him for present possession. *Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, heart hath not conceived what God hath laid up for them that love him.* Having then such hopes, my dearly beloved brethren, how earnestly should you persevere, and go forward till the day of final redemption.

2. Can it be possible that one enjoying any or all of the

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blessings just enumerated, could so far forget them, as to seek happiness elsewhere than in the service of God? Can it be possible that those who have been received back into the paternal home, should again go forth to wander? Fellow-Christian, what say you? Alas! I read in your countenances the answer my own heart has already suggested. Yes! it is too possible. Even in the church and among the true children of God there are many who turn prodigal again. Not satisfied with former danger, they are like the soldier who rushes to the battle again, or like the shipwrecked sailor, who once more tempts the waves; or perhaps I should use the comparison of the bird who rushes into the net, or the dog who returns to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. I propose, therefore, now to consider the case of the professed Christian who departs from God, as the prodigal son departs from his father. My remarks shall be directed to those who consider themselves, and in the judgment of charity may justly do so, as real Christians. Some might at first ask, Can such persons wander again? Is it possible that one who has been rescued from the pit, delivered from the wild beast, saved from the famine or the flame, should again rush to the same pit, put himself in the lion's mouth, go feed upon the husks the swine do eat, or expose himself again to the flames of wrath? The young convert, in the ardor of his first love, says no! The Christian, when drinking in the fulness of divine love, and grace for grace, says no, and angels in heaven would say no too. Fellow-Christian, what say you? The fact of such wandering does at first seem well-nigh impossible. Look at the young convert, such as you all once were. After a season of painful conviction of sin, and fear of eternal death and the pains of hell, and a deep sense of his own utter helplessness, he is at length, by God's grace, delivered. His feet are taken out of the mire, his soul is delivered from the lion's jaws, and a new song, even praise to our God, is put in his mouth. Reflect, my hearers, on that happy time, on the experience of the grace and love of Christ, and the sweet influences of the Spirit. How delightful then was prayer! how glorious did the Scriptures seem! how lovely the fellowship of the saints! how desirable the service of God! But alas, when a few short months have passed away, who is there that will not mournfully say, *Oh that it were with me as in months that are past—when the candle of the Lord shone upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness*, Job xxix. 2, 3. The

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melancholy and humiliating truth cannot be concealed, you have lost your first zeal, you have left your first love, you have grown weary and fainted in your course, you have grieved the Spirit and he is gone, you have wounded the Saviour, and he hides his face from you, you have dishonored God, and he causes you to walk in darkness. Where is the Christian who has never backslidden?

I do not say it must be thus. I would not say to a young convert, "You will certainly backslide." It need not be so. You need not backslide. The same grace that called and regenerated you, is equally able to keep you from falling,—and it is your own fault, and yours alone, if you do fall. Let me remark here, that all loss of the first ardor and freshness of a convert's feelings is not backsliding. It is not in human nature to maintain always the liveliness and freshness that most feel when they first experience that God is gracious. The great point in Christian experience is to feel so constantly one's own sinfulness, and consequent helplessness and ill-desert, as to abide by the cross evermore. As long as you feel Christ precious, and perceive his suitableness to your case, and by consequence steadily persevere in his service, so long you are not a backslider.

The young Christian is very ignorant of the sinfulness, and especially of the pride of his own heart. I well remember the counsel of a venerated parent, when I was young in the Christian life, "Guard against spiritual pride," and how, in my inexperience and ignorance, I thought it a needless caution, vainly confiding that there was no pride in my heart to guard against. Little sensible of his sinfulness, and fondly hoping that the sin that dwelleth in him is well nigh dead, the young convert too often keeps but a negligent guard. But why do I say the young convert? Show me the experienced Christian who is so fully sensible of his own sinfulness as never to be off his guard, or to flatter himself with the belief that it is well with him. When Satan sees the Christian in this state, his hellish malice is immediately on the alert, but with infernal wisdom (oh! brethren, guard against that wisdom, it is far deeper than your own, be not ignorant of his devices), he fosters the delusion by abstaining for a while from open assaults. Friends smile upon you, and praise you, and flatter you, and you think there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent. The consequence of all this is, that soon the Christian thinks a little less diligence is sufficient, that

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he may fast and pray less, be less strict in self-examination, and less fervent and frequent in prayer. Conscience is already somewhat seared before he comes to this stage, and its faint voice is silenced. These are commonly among the first steps in religious declension. Now, in all this there is no intention to depart from God. Nothing is further from the Christian's thoughts. Nay, I have often observed, that, when these incipient steps in the downward course had been already taken, the Christian was most apt to think himself established and settled. He looks on himself with some satisfaction and self-complacency. Fellow-Christian! guard against all such self-complacent imaginations, as you would against a serpent. It is one of the most dangerous signs, when you thus begin to think of yourself, and to suffer self-esteem in your heart. But it usually comes so imperceptibly, that you see it not. If Satan can only close or blind your eyes, he is sure of his victim. Oh! guard against the first little sin. It is as when one letteth out water; you know not what a breach may soon be made.

3. When the Christian once begins to backslide, there is no saying how far he may go. Your safety is only in the cross. It is only when sensible of your sinfulness and need of pardon, that you are secure. It is only when you are weak in your own estimation, that you are really strong,—only when you are empty of yourself, that you are full of Christ. The heart is too little a thing to hold your goodness and Christ's righteousness too. Just so soon, therefore, as you lose sight of the cross, and think less of the blood of sprinkling, which can cleanse your soul, just so soon are you standing in a slippery place. Glory in anything but in the cross, and you will surely be put to shame. How far you may fall, God in his wisdom and mercy only knows, but I may tell you some of the steps you will probably take.

By degrees you lose your relish for secret prayer. Your prayers become short, pointless, unfervent, and in great measure selfish, that is, you do not pray for anybody but yourself, and perhaps your own family. You have little sense of God's presence in devotion. Your prayers become a mere chattering noise, for your mind is full of wandering thoughts. Words of prayer are on your tongue, but your heart is full of vanity. Oh! how hateful this is in the sight of him who will be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Your scriptural reading and meditation become hurried and

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unprofitable. A veil is over your eyes in the reading of the law. Where you once saw beauties, you now see none. You lose your relish for many Scriptures you once delighted in. You even wonder what the Psalmist means, when he speaks so rapturously of his joy in the Scriptures. His experience does not agree with your present feelings. You now see but little glory in God—but little beauty in Christ—feel but few emotions of the Spirit—and when it comes to this point, then verily you are very far from God. You have now taken your journey into a far country. It is away from the sun. It is a very cold, dark land, and you are well nigh dead.

You now lose your relish for social Christian worship and fellowship. You come to the house of God as the people come, and sit as the people sit, and with your mouth you show much love; but where is your heart? Behold, it goeth after vanity. You come to the Lord's table, and even there your affections are but slightly aroused, for you can sit there and think of other things. Oh! how often does the listless countenance, or the half-suppressed yawn, testify to the wish that the service were over. *When will the Sabbath be gone?* Amos viii. 5. I do not say that you actually give utterance to such a wish, but He who searches the heart, too often sees a state of mind in the backsliding Christian that is but little removed from it. The feeling is there, and God sees it.

You have lost the sense of intimate union with Christ. How natural that you feel less the bonds of Christian love and affection. You cease to talk of Christ, or to speak to a fellow-Christian as to a fellow-heir of the same inheritance. You have already ceased to pray earnestly and expect blessings for them, for your few prayers are in great measure selfish, and end with yourself. You meet them, and talk of the weather, and the crops, of the news, and your studies, it may be of what you are doing for Christ, but how seldom of Christ, and what he is doing in and for you. And if you do talk of him, do you not find that your heart is so little at home in spiritual matters that it is hard to talk of them? *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,* Luke vi. 45.

How easy it is to slide from all this into coldness, and jealousy, and suspicion, and harsh remarks, and fault-finding, and evil-speaking. But I will pursue this subject no farther. Each of you know, in your own experience, how much of what is said is applicable to yourself. Do not fancy that I am finding fault

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with you, as though not in the same condemnation. If what I have said meets a response in your hearts, it is in great measure because repeated and painful experience has taught me its truth —and while thus confessing my own remissnesses, unfaithfulness, and sin, I beseech you, my Christian friends, to deal faithfully with your own selves. Where are you now? Have you not departed very far from your Father's house? and while maintaining the outward form, have you not in too great measure lost the true spirit of the Christian profession? *Be zealous, therefore, and repent*, Rev. iii. 19.

I have thus endeavored to describe some of the steps by which the Christian departs from God; but all that has been said, gives a very faint idea of the ingratitude of such conduct, or its vileness in the sight of God, to say nothing of the evil it inflicts on your own soul. If you be a true Christian, the only evidence of it that you can have while in this state will be, a deep and abiding dissatisfaction with yourself, and desire to return. If you have fallen into the state described, and yet are satisfied therewith, and feel no anxiety to have it altered, then I must say unto you, you have no reason to think yourself a Christian. You have no reason to suppose you ever knew the grace of God. What! a Christian, and yet satisfied to live thus? a Christian, so cold, so formal, so far away, and yet at ease! I pray God you be not deceiving yourself with a mere name to live. How can the Christian be at ease in such circumstances? A voice is telling him that all is not right, that he is out of the way. Conscience reproaches him, he seeks to pacify it, promises amendment, partially reforms—but it too often happens that this is done with but half an heart, and no wonder if he fails in returning, and goes mourning and complaining, neither heartily enjoying the pleasures of sin, nor yet tasting the love of God. *How long halt ye between two opinions?* You try to satisfy yourselves with some outward services, some compensation, as it were, for the devotion of the heart. You are diligent in business, in study, in public meetings, but the heart is wandering, and you are unhappy, and will be so, until you can fully adopt the Psalmist's prayer—*Unite my heart to fear thy name*, Ps. lxxxvi. 11.

If the Christian does not speedily turn to God with his whole heart, the result of all will be, that there will be *a famine in the land.* The manna once gathered will not always keep, the sweetness of past experience will not remain, if not renewed by fresh

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supplies. Study, business, outward forms and services, and even Christian ordinances will lose their charms, and cease to satisfy you, because God's blessing is not on them, they become husks, they are in themselves nothing but husks, and *those that are without* will enjoy them as much as you, if the Spirit of Christ gives you not vitality and strength to appreciate their sweetness. I know of few conditions so distressing as that of the Christian who has left God, and yet cannot find pleasure in the world. Of all men he is most miserable. He has left God, and God has left him. He dares not rest in the world, *he cannot serve God and mammon*, he has no heart to pray or read, and yet no satisfaction in anything else. I will not presume to say how much of God's displeasure you may be left to feel, but if God dealt with you as you deserve, where would you be? *You have committed two evils; you have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water*, Jer. ii. 13.

Having dwelt so much at length on these topics, I can say but little on what remains, and shall merely suggest a few thoughts for your consideration.

It may be, notwithstanding your wanderings, that God will be gracious, and will give his good Spirit to reclaim you. If so, the Christian will reflect on his ways, how he has grieved the Spirit, ungratefully requited the care of God, and the grace of Christ. He will consider his own helpless condition and starved state, and adopting the words of the prodigal, he will be deeply affected with penitence, self-loathing, and remorse, and he will have need for it all. Thus *he comes to himself.* In all this wandering and backsliding you have been as far removed as possible from all resemblance to your spiritual nature, but penitence and prayer are the Christian's vital breath. Return therefore unto God. Take with you words. Come unto the Father you have so foolishly and deeply grieved. Come with the spirit of a child, casting yourself unreservedly on his mercy, acknowledging your sins, and resolving by his grace assisting, no more to wander from him. If he receives you, it will be well. If he does not, you can but die—but our Saviour says, *He will in no wise cast you out.*

NINGPO, September 6, 1846.

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SERMON XLV.

RETURNING TO GOD.

And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.—Luke xv. 20.

Having, in a former discourse, spoken at some length of the steps by which a true child of God may, and often does, depart, and backslide from the service of his Heavenly Father, I propose now to describe the road by which he returns to that service. the subject of the former discourse was one comparatively easy to set before you, for it was familiar to you all, by reason of repeated experience in that backward course; but it is not easy to set the subject of the present discourse so fully before you. There are few Christians who have not lost the fervor of their first love. There are few who do not readily comprehend the truth of the prophetic declaration, *Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you*, Jer. ii. 19, and therefore, when such a subject is preached about, every word that is said finds a ready response in their hearts. But there are many Christians, who, after backsliding, do not fully return to the Lord their God. There are many who go on halting in their course, and the description of Gideon's army after their victory over Midian, *faint, yet pursuing*, might be applied to many a child of God, of whom it ought to be said, *He runs, and is not weary, walks, and is not faint*, Is. xl. 31. How can such persons describe aright, or fully comprehend the description of the hearty return, and full reconciliation of the child of many wanderings and sins, and the Father above, ever merciful and gracious?

There are some Christians, who, in the inexperience of their first religious course, and when they first feel the difficulties of keeping near to God, suffer themselves to say, "It would be in some respects well, if we did for a time backslide. We should then know how evil a thing it is, and being fully sensible of this,

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and terrified by it, we should thereby be kept from future falls, and made more careful and diligent in our after course." I know not how common such an imagination may be, but it is more common than many suppose, and is one of the most dangerous delusions with which Satan tempts the believer. I warn you against it, in all its forms. If you give way to it, you will find its end to be like that of Eve, when plucking the forbidden fruit. You shall thus indeed know both good and evil. You shall know, by your brief experience, the good of keeping close to Christ, and by your bitter sorrows and repentance, the evil of departing from him. You shall get a wound and dishonor not soon wiped away. You will probably go halting for many a long day, and over many a rough and painful road. You may not see the light of God's countenance again, so soon as you fondly suppose. He is not bound to be gracious unto you, and the only hope you can have is in his mercy, his free favor. That mercy, that favor is exceedingly great, but has it never occurred to you, my fellow-Christian, that it may be exercised in the way of severe chastisements for sin, which, while they punish, also cure? There are some diseases brought on by over-indulgence and neglect of caution, which are cured only by long mortification of the body and bitter drugs, and in which the wise and kind physician finds it necessary to confine his patient to a diet on which a healthy man would almost starve. It may be so with you, when you backslide. Had you continued walking with God, *he would have fed you with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock would he have satisfied you*, Ps. lxxxi. 16, but now you have departed from him, and by so doing inflicted such an injury on your spiritual life, that his mercy finds no other way of healing you, except by feeding you with *the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction*, Is. xxx. 20. *He may feed you with the bread of tears, and give you tears to drink in great measure*, Ps. lxxx. 5, and all this, not simply in punishment, but in mercy. Beware then of backsliding; you know not where it will end, or in what ways you may be restored from it. He may see it necessary to visit you with sore trials—to cause you to lie long amidst distressing doubts of his favor, and fears of his wrath, and deep self-reproaches. It was well said by Doddridge, "The sorrows of the convinced sinner when first he comes to God, are not to be compared with those of the backslider when he returns from his wanderings."

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You remember the story of Christian, who fell asleep in the arbor, on his way up the hill Difficulty. There he lost his evidence of being a child of God; and after coming nearly to the Palace Beautiful, he was obliged to go back and seek it. "But all the way he went back who can sufficiently describe the sorrow of Christian's heart? Sometimes he sighed, sometimes he wept, and oftentimes he chid himself for being so foolish as to fall asleep in that place, which was erected only for a little refreshment in his weariness." You remember his self-accusations. "How many steps have I taken in vain. Thus it happened to Israel. For their sin they were sent back again by the way of the Red Sea; and I am made to tread those steps with sorrow which I might have trod with delight, had it not been for this sinful sleep. How far might I have been on my way by this time? I am made to tread those steps thrice over which I needed not to have trod but once: yea, now also I am like to be benighted, for the day is almost spent. Oh that I had not slept!" You remember also, that after he recovered his evidence, he was unable with the utmost diligence to reach the Palace Beautiful before the sun went down. "This made him again recall the vanity of his sleeping to his mind, and to exclaim—Oh, thou sinful sleep! how for thy sake am I like to be benighted in my journey! I must walk without the sun, darkness must cover the path of my feet, and I must hear the noise of doleful creatures because of my sinful sleep!"

Do not think that in these preliminary observations there is any departure from the subject of the discourse, as already announced. It will be found, that generally, the course of the backsliding Christian's return to God, commences in such thoughts as these.

As already remarked, no one can say how long or how far the backsliding Christian may depart from God. Some go so far that they lose every external mark of being his, and his ministers and the officers of his church find it necessary to exclude them from the fellowship of his people. Such give great occasion to the enemies of religion to blaspheme, and though by the mercy of God they may be restored, yet it should be only after a public profession of repentance, and a satisfactory evidence of a hearty and thorough change of conduct. But the majority of those who fall backward do not go to this extreme length, and it

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is with the return of this class that we are now principally concerned. In regard to such as these I remark,

1. If he be a Christian, he cannot be satisfied while in this backsliding state. You may hide your eyes, or forget for awhile, or seek to quiet conscience, but these can be only temporary expedients. If you are a true child of God it is impossible for you to depart from him, and yet approve of the departure. You must see that something is wrong, and you cannot be satisfied while it is so. The Christian has a spiritual life within him which cannot be supported by the husks on which men of the world feed. God hath made you for himself. He has given you himself for the portion of your soul; and though your eye may become so blind, and your heart so dull, that for awhile your employment, correspondence, studies, religious services, and friends, may too much engross you, yet these cannot fill your heart. You may attend to all these, and you will, so long as you do not enjoy God in them all, be sensible of an emptiness, an aching void, which nothing but He who is supremely good and real can fill. The sense of dissatisfaction, of emptiness, may be more or less painful in different persons, but I am persuaded that every true child of God feels it when he does not have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. It sometimes is the occasion of leading such to seek more earnestly for satisfaction in other things. Hardly sensible that their inward longing arises from the natural desires of the spiritual life after him who is its source, they seek to satisfy it with other pursuits, and especially by increased attention to external duties. But all this will not satisfy you, and you ought to thank God that it is so. It is a mercy of which you are too little sensible, when you are kept from resting in such unsatisfying forms.

2. This internal dissatisfaction leads the Christian to reflection. "Why am I living on these husks? Is there nothing better than these to be had? Am I a child of God and an heir of immortal life, and yet put off with things unsatisfying in their own nature, and that perish with the using? Has my heavenly Father nothing better than these for the immortal souls of his children? How many hired servants of my Father have bread enough, and to spare, while I perish with hunger?" Such reflections as these are most profitable, and they lead to further and deeper self-examination.

3. By this self-examination the Christian is led to see his sin-

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fulness in its true light. As this is the most important step in every attempt to return to God, it is proper to speak of it particularly.

The inspired declaration respecting the heart, that *it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9, is one whose truth none feels so deeply as the advanced and confirmed Christian. This evil nature is not removed all at once. And one of the strongest and best proofs of your growth in grace is found in your deeper conviction and heartier sorrow for it. It was this natural tendency to what is evil that has led you to backslide, and therefore the first step in return must consist in deep humiliation for, and confession of it. Of this we have an instructive example in the case of David the King of Israel. With the history of his melancholy fall you are doubtless all familiar. It was after he had become settled in his kingdom, and in such security and prosperity that he was able to employ a part of his forces in foreign wars. During this time of ease he fell into a state of backsliding that resulted in open and dreadful sin, and so seared had his conscience become, that it would seem as if some weeks or months must have rolled away ere he became duly sensible of his state. A divinely commissioned messenger aroused him from this state of insensibility—a heavy judgment visited him at the time. Sorer trials were in store for him; and he was forewarned that the sword should never depart from his house. His conscience was now thoroughly aroused, and in this state he penned the li. Psalm, which has ever been a model for the confessions of the returning child of God. In this Psalm his confessions are not confined to the enumeration of his actual sins. He goes down to the root of the matter, to the fountain of original depravity, and with the deepest humility he confesses, *Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* And his prayer is, *Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within me.* Here, my Christian friends, is the root of the matter. If you feel that you have departed from God—if you desire to return to him, then commence your course with humiliation and confession of sin, and in these exercises give the first place to that sin which dwelleth in you, and which causes that when you would do good, evil is present with you.

And here, along with this confession of original sin, let there be a full and hearty confession and repentance of actual transgressions. Say with David, *I acknowledge my transgressions, and*

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my sin is ever before me. And again in another Psalm, *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*, Ps. xxxii. 5. In repentance and confession of sin, one point is of special importance. We must see that the chief vileness of sin consists in the fact, that it is *against God.* To offend a fellow-man is bad enough, but to sin against the holy Majesty of heaven, to requite with ingratitude the bounty of a Father like our God—surely no words can express this too strongly. Hence the burden of the prodigal son's confession, was, *I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight*, and in the enormity of David's sin against God, his offences against Uriah and Uriah's wife, could scarcely come into notice, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* While it is true that the greatness of every sin is chiefly in its being against God, yet this seems more especially true of the sin of backsliding, and departing from him. Hence the strong language of the prophet Jeremiah.

Be astonished, oh ye heavens at this,
And be horribly afraid,
Be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.
For my people have committed two evils;
They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters,
And hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns,
That can hold no water, Jer. ii. 12, 13.

It is no light sin to forsake God. Why should you forsake him, if he gives you all you need, and all he promised? Surely you will not say that you leave him because he has failed or disappointed you in any point. Can the fountain of living waters run dry? Can the spring of eternity fail? Can the water of the river of life cease to satisfy the thirst of the spiritually living soul? Impossible! and yet your forsaking of God, implies all this neglect of himself, unbelief of his word, contempt of his promises, yea, and actually charging God with being false to his word—for if he were not false, why should you leave him? And yet you have left him, and sought for that sweetness elsewhere! And where? Verily, in broken cisterns, and in failing streams, which at best are derived only from Him, and which too often are but the muddy pools and brackish ponds where those who never quaffed the water of everlasting life, are vainly striving to slake the fevered thirst of sin! What is this but exalting the creature

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above the Creator—the gift above the giver—and wherein does it differ from the folly and sin of the idolater, who says to the stock and the stone, *Deliver me, for thou art my God*, Is. xliv. 17. *Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry*, 1 Sam. xv. 23. Nay, it is worse than this, the idolater is ignorant of his Lord's will, but you are not. The idolater has never heard of the death of Christ, but you are casting under foot, or behind your back, the blood of the covenant, and forgetting him, who, as he loved you with an everlasting love, and laid down his life to save you, so he does not forget you now, when he is on his throne of glory in the heavens. Truly it was no exaggeration when the prophet apostrophized the heavens and the earth, for the earth where our Saviour suffered, and the heavens where he reigns, must be equally astonished at the treatment he receives from those whom he died to redeem. Hence, learn too, how wonderfully great his salvation must be, for it covers even the guilt of those who treat him with such ingratitude as this.

Happiness in one form or other, is the object of every man's search, and even the backslider in heart and in life, seeks it in his backsliding. But you cannot find it in such broken cisterns. Though you made your researches as extensive and systematic as those of Solomon, yet like him must you say at last, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit*, Ecc. i. 2, and to this point, sooner or later, must every backslider come. When it comes to this, then there is hope. Nothing tames the wild spirit like hunger, and when brought down and humbled by repeated disappointments, and sorrows, you will more readily see the depth of your sin, and acknowledge it with full confession before God.

4. We have now traced the returning prodigal through the various stages of self-dissatisfaction, reflection, self-examination, and humiliation. There is still one step not less important than any of these. It is in full and hearty confession of sin, to men if you have wronged or injured them, but especially to God. Come unto him with the spirit of a child. Say with the prodigal, *I will arise and go unto my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Do not palliate or cover your guilt. Peace is found only in full confession. *While I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long*, Ps. xxxii. 3.

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Along with your repentance and confession, join humble but hearty resolutions, that in God's strength you will do better hereafter, and commence at once the fulfilment of those resolutions, by the renewed and diligent performance of all the duties, of prayer, self-examination, reading of the Scriptures, Christian-fellowship and communion, with social and public worship—the neglect of which were so many of the steps in your downward course.

Thus acting, my Christian brethren, we may come unto God who is the portion of our soul. Unto God our exceeding joy. Unto Christ in whom we are one, and unto the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, and sanctifies and prepares us for our heavenly home.

It is possible that some may ask with surprise, "Is this painful course which you have marked out, the only way by which the backslider can return to God? We had thought it was an easier and more joyful thing to come to him?" It is very possible you may have thought so, but surely nothing save the want of reflection could induce such a supposition. What other feelings than those of sorrow, could the prodigal have, while as yet, only on the road to his father's house? How could he know that the doors of the house he had so ungratefully forsaken, would be opened to him again? or that the heart of his father so deeply wounded and grieved by his conduct still beat with love to him? His highest hopes were fixed on a servant's place, and many fears of utter disownment must have mingled with his aspirations. No doubt his sighs were wafted by the breeze, and his tears watered the road, as he bent his way to his father's house; nor was his sorrow turned into joy until he felt his father's embrace, and was assured by the beating of his heart, that the fountain of a parent's love drieth not away. What reason have you for joy, until you meet the same reception? You chose to depart, you sowed corruption, and must reap corruption as long as you walk in the ways of your own choosing. I know no other way by which you can return, save the one now pointed out,—and I add this warning here. If you are really a child of God, and have backslidden from him, then must you of your own accord return in his way, or he will bring you back in a manner more painful still. If the wandering child will return of its own accord, with weeping and confession of sin, it is well,—but if not, then the rod and the scourge must drive it home. If you are really the child of God,

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and yet will not come in the way now pointed out, then must we leave you to be brought back by him, whose mercy is too great to suffer you to perish for want of chastisement, should the soft words of inviting affection prove unavailing. Choose ye, my brethren, in which way ye will return.

The prodigal son has resolved to return to his father's house. It is only after much hesitation and delay that he comes to a resolution, the execution of which must so deeply humble him. Nor is it without many fears that he will not be again received. How can he expect that God will be gracious to him? You might represent to yourselves the difficulties in the way of your restoration to favor, and you may be sure that Satan will make them no less. He will suggest to you, "You cannot return, you have sinned too long and deeply, God will not receive you." If possible the great adversary will tempt you to adopt the sentiments and language of backsliding Israel. *There is no hope. No; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go*, Jer. ii. 25. Give not way, I beseech you, to his devices. Remember the apostle's words, *We are saved by hope*, Rom. viii. 24, and hope still in the mercy of God. Deal not so with God. His ways are not as our ways. *As the heavens are higher than the earth so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts*, Is. lv. 9. His manner of dealing with his people, is not the manner of men. Go back to the wilderness of Sinai. Israel had sinned and worshipped the golden calf, and for their sin God was justly angry. He commanded them to put off their ornaments, *and the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, by the mount Horeb*, Exod. xxxiii. 6. Moses went up into the mountain to appear as mediator for Israel, and deep as had been the sin, and great as had been the provocation of the people, yet God was pleased to hear the words and prayer of his servant, and to manifest himself a God, *merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty*, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. We, too, have a mediator, one "like unto Moses," and yet far greater than he, even as a son is greater than any servant however faithful. Therefore *take with you words, and turn unto the Lord; say unto him take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. Thus coming, thus confessing, thus hoping in the merits of our one great Mediator, you will surely find him gracious. *Though*

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your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, Is. i. 18.

Though authorized to say in the fullest manner that God will be gracious to every penitent who thus returns, yet I do not feel myself authorized to say, that he will in all cases, or at once, show you his favor, and restore to you again the joys of his salvation. He may pardon you, but not let you know that you are pardoned. The parable of the prodigal son teaches us to expect that in most cases, where any one fully returns to him, the favor of God will be again fully manifested to him. But reason and Scripture alike teach us that there are cases in which, though his anger be turned away, and he be pacified towards those that have backslidden, yet will he cause *them to remember, and be confounded, and never open their mouth any more, because of their shame, even when he is pacified towards them*, Ezek. xvi. 63. It is also to be borne in mind, as already intimated in the beginning of this discourse, that your sin, and especially your long persisting in your departure, may have inflicted such a wound on your spiritual life, that his very mercy may make it necessary to withhold the sensible manifestations of his love. His favor would be like stimulating wine to an excited and fevered constitution, when for such as you, fasting and prayer may be the only proper prescriptions.

I know therefore of no better, or safer advice to give you than this—come unto God, without any reserve, make no stipulations with him, except for *mercy;* leave it entirely to him to grant you joy or sorrow, but resolve, yea, and in reliance on him, promise, that henceforth, you will persevere in his service, and though in time past other lords may have had dominion over you, yet in time to come, make mention only of his name; and whatever happens to you, let your resolution be like that of the Jews, when in Nehemiah's time they returned from their long captivity in Babylon. *We will not forsake the house of our God*, Neh. x. 39.

Persevering in this course, you will sooner or later find that *like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*, Ps. ciii. 13, and, though *weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning*, Ps. xxx. 5.

NINGPO, October 11, 1846.

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SERMON XLVI.

THE LORD IS OUR JUDGE.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not my own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.—1 Cor. iv. 1–5.

In the Corinthian church many parties had sprung up, some declaring for one teacher and one mode of doctrine, and some for another, some praising this preacher, and some flocking after that one; and this state of things had come to such a pitch, as to be a serious impediment to their Christian advancement. The apostle, therefore, in this Epistle shows how vain all such contentions are, and how unbecoming, and even wicked, when all are servants, to be exalting one above, or at the expense of another. While some of the Corinthian believers had exalted the apostle above measure, even striving to make him an object of almost idolatrous veneration, others had gone to the opposite extreme, and by censures and false imputations, sought to cast him down, or treated him with unbecoming disrespect. This false spirit of regard to men, in each of its extremes, the apostle combats in the words of the text, and represses it by his account in the first verse of the chapter, of the nature of the ministerial office. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*, and inquire not into our gifts and talents, but our *faithfulness*, in the ministry of Christ. Then, to show them still further the impropriety of their course, in so unduly regarding, either favorably or unfavorably, any man, or set of men, he tells them the principle by which he was actuated

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in all his actions as a man, and all his dealings with men, proposing it at the same time as a model for them to imitate. This principle is in few words, as follows. That man is an accountable creature, responsible not to man, but to God, by whom he will be surely judged at last; and that this judgment of God's is of such vast importance and concern, that all our efforts should be to prepare for it, comparatively regardless of the opinions of men, and even placing no reliance on the testimony of our own hearts, except so far as they coincide with the revealed will of God.

I conceive this to be the meaning of the words of the text, and to express the great principle of the apostle, which he aims to set before his hearers. In the remarks that succeed, I shall endeavor to follow the order in which the apostle expresses the several parts of his principle, and in so doing to apply it to our own case, without any particular reference to the circumstances of the Corinthian church, which called it forth.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. This sets forth the character of the ministers of the gospel, not as lords over God's heritage, not as entitled to rule with despotic power, nor yet as entitled to take their ease and be merry, but, on the contrary, as servants, ministers, υπηρετας, under-servants of Christ, having work to do, being stewards or dispensers of the mysteries of God. Thus, you see, we are servants, and not lords, and therefore not to be exalted into objects of worship, or blind submission, nor made the head of any party, to the dividing of the body of Christ. And yet, though we are servants, you are not to look upon us as common servants, to be treated with only ordinary courtesy. We are servants, and yet servants intrusted with a most important and arduous office, even to be the dispensers of the mysteries of God. By mysteries here, is not meant things so mysterious that they cannot be comprehended—such as the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Such is not the meaning of the word mystery in the New Testament. As used by the apostle Paul, it signifies those truths of God which he has revealed to us, and which, when revealed, may be understood without difficulty, though, had they not been revealed, they could not have been known. In this sense the apostle often speaks of the calling of the Gentiles as a *mystery*, and of the change in the body of the saints who may be alive at the last day. We are appointed, then, as the servants of Christ, to dispense unto you the knowl-

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edge of these mysteries, and since this is a most important work, the command to you is, *to esteem very highly in love* those who are engaged in it, *for their work's sake.* What we say unto you, you are not to receive, merely because we say it, but it is to be received with respect, and if it accords with the word of God, then is it to be received *not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God,* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

Now, that which is required of us, who are engaged in this ministry of Christ, and dispensation of these mysteries, is not that we should aim to be eloquent—not that we present you with subtle reasonings and fine fancies—not that we tickle your ears, and cause you to go away and say, "What a great sermon we have had." In this we should but heap greater condemnation against ourselves, and danger to you. What is required in stewards is, *that a man be faithful.* Our words may be fine or coarse, and our thoughts common-place or original, but what is required by the wants of your souls, and by the God who is above us, and the Saviour who died for us, is, that we deal faithfully with you, giving you the word of God, telling you his truth as he has given it to us, not mincing, not concealing, not keeping back any part of it, not seeking your applause or favor, but rather, as the apostle says, seeking *not yours, but you.* What is required is, that we be faithful to him that sent us, and faithful to you, if so be we may save your souls. Thus, *a faithful ambassador is health,* Prov. xiii. 17; but we shall be of little benefit to you, if, by our unfaithfulness, we merely please you to your ruin. If, by our faithfulness, we cannot save you, yet at least it is required of us, that your blood be not found in our skirts, and that you have no cause to say, that you were lost by our carelessness or remissness in the performance of our work.

If we are the means of benefit to you, it will be but natural that we should be esteemed by you, but your gratitude and kindness, however delightful to us, are not our reward. The faithful servant in the parable received the reward of ruling over cities, from his Lord alone.

But let it not be thought that ministers are the only stewards, and the only ones that are required to be faithful. You are all stewards. You have all received of God a part to perform—you have all to dispense, in your several spheres, the knowledge of his name, and you are all equally required to be faithful. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to*

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another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, 1 Pet. iv. 10. The grace of God is so *manifold*, as the apostle most truly expresses it, that no one man, or body of men, can represent it all, or dispense it all, and though it may be allowed that the ministry of Christ is the most important, yet it is not the only mode in which that grace is dispensed. Therefore, *as every man has received his gift*—whether it be large, or whether it be small, so minister, and minister it faithfully. In that day, it will not be asked, "Were you learned? were you known? were you honored among men?" It will not be asked, "Did you hold a commanding position, with great means of usefulness?" But it will be asked, "Were you faithful in your appointed sphere, however small or mean?" and be assured, that he which shall be found to have *been faithful, even in a few things, shall enter into the joy of his Lord*, Luke xix. 17. If unfaithful, it is true you may not have such a fearful account to render, as will the unfaithful minister of Christ, but it will be fearful enough, and if you are wise, you will seek in time to approve yourselves faithful. To you, as well as to ministers of the gospel, belongs what follows in the 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of this chapter, and I shall so speak of them.

There were many among the Corinthians, who for one reason or other had conceived very erroneous and unkind opinions respecting the apostle Paul, and some of them seem to have been not at all backward in expressing their unfavorable judgment of him. But if they thought that he would be disturbed by their judgment of him, whether good or bad, so as to alter or shape his course to meet their views, they were greatly mistaken. He was one who knew too well *the powers of the world to come*, to be in subjection to the powers of the present world. He knew too well *the terrors of the Lord*, to fear those of men, he had estimated the relative importance of things eternal and temporal, and the relative greatness of God and man, too wisely to suffer the inferior to rise above the superior, or the fear of man to overcome the fear of God. In all this there was no haughtiness, no supercilious contempt of the opinions of men, or disregard of the good will of good men. He was well aware of the benefit of a good name, and so far as he could, he *sought to please all men*. Yet, with every proper sentiment of respect for all that is wise and good among men, he expressed but a sober and just appreciation of all human judgments as distinguished from the judgments of

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God, when he said, *With me it is a very small thing* (εις ελαχιστον εἰναι, a matter of the very smallest moment), *to be judged of you, or of man's judgment.* How different is this calm judgment of the apostle, from that of the mass of men, and of even good men. Few snares beset a man so much as the fear of man; few temptations so strong as to bow before the voice of a multitude either present or as anticipated in the judgments of posterity. It is one of the highest triumphs of moral courage and true virtue to rise superior to the fear of man, and withstand the influence of a multitude; while to follow the multitude to do evil is a temptation which even the good find it most difficult to resist. How rare it is to meet an Abdiel,

> "faithful found
> Among the faithless, faithful only he,
> Nor number nor example with him wrought
> To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
> Though single."

while on the contrary, the character of Byends in the Pilgrim's Progress, who went with the world, is too lamentably common.

It must be confessed that to one who looks only at the present world, there is something vastly imposing in the judgment of man. The voice of man will awe even the untamed lion in the forest, and the shout of a multitude is the most sublime thing under heaven, saving only the war of the ocean, and the voice of the thunder. And when that judgment is given with all the pomp and pageantry that man can throw around it—the solemn court, the judge and jury, the witness, counsel and spectators, and life or death hanging on the result,—his heart must be strongly nerved who can stand against all this.

And yet even all this is not so hard to stand against as the silent judgment that masses of men, or nations often form, by which a person is as surely doomed, as though sentence had gone forth in form against him. To feel one's self a marked man, to feel that every eye sees you, that every finger is pointed at you, that every heart is set against you, this is that, the very apprehension of which, is enough to unnerve most men. And yet all this may be borne, and there have been those who have worthily stood out against it all. It is sublime to see the unanimous assent and judgment of a multitude. It is more sublime to see one man, in the calmness and fortitude of conscious innocence and rectitude, stand up against a multitude, in defence of truth and

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righteousness, and this the apostle Paul could do. *It is with me a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment.*

But what upheld the apostle in this noble stand? Was it indeed his own innocence? Was it indeed that he had no evil in him, so that like One greater than he, he could say to his accusers, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* No, my brethren, his courage arose from a very different source. If he disregarded the judgments of men, it was from no overweening confidence in his own. If he feared not their censures, it was not because he could say, "I am pure. I have not sinned." He expressly repudiates all such motives. After saying so emphatically that he regarded not the pomp and terror of any day of man's judgment, he adds, *Yea, I judge not mine own self.* My confidence is not founded in self-esteem or self-approbation. *For though I know nothing by myself*, though I am not conscious of anything that is wrong in those parts of my conduct which you blame, *yet am I not hereby justified*, but he that *judgeth me is the Lord*, and his judgment is of so much consequence, that I care little for yours. If I can but approve myself to him, men may say of me what they please. Such seems to have been the apostle's reasoning. He was not afraid of the judgment of men, but this was not because he was satisfied with his own heart's approval, for he knew of one *greater than his heart*, who must judge him. True, he knew nothing by himself, he was not conscious of any wilful sin or failure, but he well knew that he saw not as God saw, that where he might be perfectly satisfied, the law of God might justly demand more, and that where he saw nothing wrong, God might see much to abhor. Like the Psalmist, his prayer was, *Cleanse thou me from secret faults*, as well as *keep me back from presumptuous sins*, Ps. xix. 12. The apostle here refers to the deep-seated wickedness of the human heart, which other men cannot know, and which even the sincere believer does not fully discover, and he shows us that while such a heart exists in us, we cannot hope to be saved either by the good judgment of our fellow-men, or by the approval of our own hearts, unless that judgment and approval coincide with the judgment and approval of the ultimate Judge of all. *If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand*, Job ix. 3. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, oh Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*, Ps. cxliii. 2. How does this fact at once beat down all the far-famed terror of human judgment. *He that judgeth me is the Lord.*

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Not you, my fellow-sinners, for you too must stand at his judgment bar, not even you, my own erring though sincere heart, but he in whom is no sin, and who is as incapable of error or mistake as he is of injustice—*even the Lord.*

What a judge is here! He who made us, who sees us. *He who pondereth the hearts*, Prov. xxi. 2. *Who knows what is in man*, John iii. 23. *Whose word is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. vi. 12. He that shall judge us is he whose judgment is just—whose judgment shall stand, and who hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world. What a day that will be! It is often called, *the day*, 1 Cor. iii. 13.

> "Great day, for which all other days were made,
> No eye of man hath seen a day like this."

Away with human days! with all their petty pomp, and childish ceremonials! They may tickle the eyes of the unthinking multitude, but what are they to *the day of the Lord?* Oh, name them not together. The apostle did well to say, *It is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's day, for he that judgeth me is the Lord.* Behold there is a throne, a great white throne—a court solemn and vast, for heaven and earth have fled away, and there is nothing to disturb the scene. Spectators there are, the hosts of heaven, and of unfallen worlds, it may be, too—jury and witnesses are abundant; but in the court, and on this day, none are needed, for the Judge hath seen all, and the conscience answers to his voice. The judgment will not be given then according to the judgment that you or I, or the world may now form, but according to the immutable laws of God. A reward and a penalty are in store. Eternal life and everlasting death will be the consequence of that great day.

Did not the apostle act wisely when he said that this was the day he feared, more than all human days? And ye who profess to believe his words, and yet tremble at the voice of human favor or dispraise, are ye wise in your course? Why do you not hearken to his exhortations, and form your judgments of yourselves and others accordingly?

One question more remains to be considered, before we attend to the practical lessons of this subject. What shall be judged in that day? The answer is ready, for the apostle gives it in the

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text—*the hidden things of darkness, and the counsels of the hearts.* It matters not how secret or how carefully hidden now, every secret thing will then come forth. What has been spoken in the ear, under the pledge of inviolable secrecy, will then be proclaimed as on the house-tops. Counsels and thoughts that you blush to own will then be brought to light. Yea, my fellow-Christian, I warn you not to be too confident—that in virtue of your privilege as a son and heir, you shall escape exposure in that day. We read of some who are saved, *yet so as by fire*, 1 Cor. iii. 15; and the beloved disciple exhorts Christians to *abide in him*, in order that they may not *be ashamed before him at his coming*, 1 John ii. 28. There have been good men who have interpreted this verse as meaning, that before Christians are received into their final rest, their evil deeds will be exposed before all men, that all may see them, and they shall *be ashamed* in the presence of Christ. In that hour of shame in the presence of the Saviour and his angels, how much agony may be experienced! Even angels it may be will hide their faces at the sight, and you may enter heaven, feeling as though you could never open your mouth any more because of your shame, even when your Lord is pacified towards you for all that you have done, Ezek. xvi. 63.

From the many practical lessons which this subject inculcates, I select only a few, but they are deeply important to you and me.

1. Judge nothing before the time. Beware of rash and hasty judgments of your fellow-men. You do not, and perhaps cannot understand all their motives and thoughts, nor all the facts by which they are actuated. Nor are you their judge. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servants? To his own master he standeth or falleth*, Rom. xiv. 4. He will be judged in due season, and that judgment will be true and just. Suspend your judgment till then. Still less may you presume to judge the Lord for any of his ways. You cannot understand either what he does, or why he does it. His judgments are a great deep, and his ways are high out of your sight. Do not presume to judge him for what he does; and still less for what he does not—or what in your blindness he may seem not to do. There will be many things in providence both as regards yourself and others, respecting which you must be content to take our Saviour's word. *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*, John xiii. 7. *If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting*

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of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter, for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they, Ecc. v. 8. It will be all right in due season, but do you beware of impiously arraigning or questioning your Judge. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 25.

2. Learn hence to estimate aright the value of human praise and censure. There are many who are in constant anxiety from desire for the praise of men, and whose minds are instantly disquieted when they hear that anything has been said respecting them. What a temptation is there in the voice of fame! And yet reflect a moment, and then say, what is the real worth or consequence of the favor of men? It may put bread in your mouth, or it may gild your life, but will it prolong your days, or will it shield you from the judgment of God? Nay, did not Christ say, *Woe unto you when all men speak well of you,* Luke vi. 36. Can man's praise reverse God's censure?

Nor on the other hand are you too much to fear the censures of men. This is a necessary consequence of what has been already said. It is hard, perhaps impossible, to avoid censure from men. It may be just or it may be unjust, or it may be a mixture of both, but it will almost surely come. There will be evil reports, there will be hard names, there will be slanders, and slander is hard to bear. There be many who when they hear the voice of slander, although they are conscious of innocence, yet it is a load that presses them to the earth; there is shame, there is agony, there is utter prostration of soul at the thought of being a by-word and reproach in the mouths of men. But is this right? Are men your judges, by whom your character and state are to be fixed forever? If man condemns you, God may yet approve, and is his favor nothing? Nay, my brethren, it is sinful to fear the voice of man, if God's voice is for you. Study therefore to approve yourselves to him, and the day of the Lord shall declare your innocence, and shall cover those who would harm you with shame.

3. In that day all secret things will be made known. I need not quote the Scriptures that prove this truth, you know them well. The sins of Christians will be made known too, however closely they may be concealed now. Many are anxious to conceal their faults, and it may be right to conceal them where the making them known would only needlessly bring odium on the cause of truth. But there are two cases in which you may not

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conceal a fault with impunity. You may not conceal anything whatever from God; and if you have injured a fellow-man, you may not conceal it from him, but should go and confess and obtain his pardon. Present concealment in these two cases will only make the inevitable disclosure at the last day more painful and humiliating, while repentance and confession now may save you bitter pain and shame at last.

Finally, how all-important is the favor of God. He is our judge. His word must stand. Let it be your chief concern now, to secure his favor; be mainly anxious to approve yourself to him, and not to your perishing fellow-men. Fear him and not them. Hear the solemn words of Christ, *I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him*, Luke xii. 4, 5. Thus fearing him, thus living for him, thus approving yourselves unto him, the censures and the praises of men alike shall pass you harmlessly by, and at that day when the Lord comes, he will minister unto you an entrance abundantly into his everlasting kingdom.

NINGPO, December 13, 1836.

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SERMON XLVII.

SERVANTS—SONS—HEIRS.

Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.—GAL. iv. 7.

ALL truth is bound together by intimate relations, and each separate truth exerts an influence on every other truth in God's creation. Hence it matters not what science or department of natural or revealed truth be the object of our attention, if but the whole soul be given to its study, the results will be of great importance. Take the most insignificant idea, the merest germ of thought, or if you will, the faintest reflection of any one truth, and follow it out in all its far-reaching influences and relations, and how soon will it generate thoughts,

"That wander through eternity."

The reason of this is, that all God's works form one vast whole, and each part has its relations with every other. If such the results then, when we consider even the more unimportant parts of truth, what wonderful connections and developments should we expect when we consider those more important points, whose place in the great system of truth may be compared to that of the backbone and spinal chord in the human body, or the Alpine and Himmalaya mountains, or the Nile and the Amazon rivers in the material globe? And when a mind of the highest order, like that of the apostle Paul, cultivated as his was, and joined with an almost angelic or seraphic love, is applied to the study of a science of the utmost importance, of that science, which is emphatically *life*, John xvii. 3, then, my Christian hearers, I ask you, can any expectation be too high? May we not look for truths and disclosures, before which all the boasted discoveries of modern science will seem trifles? and for developments of God's wisdom, into which even the angels might desire to look?

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It is delightful to contemplate the character of the apostle Paul. Would that we could rise to but half the height of his devotion! So full of ardor that his soul was wrapped up in Christ and in heaven, even while here on earth; and though oftentimes in a strait betwixt two, yet having *a desire to depart and be with Christ*, so that even *death was gain*. If such the character of the man, it is natural to expect some manifestation of it in his epistles. The subjects of Christianity had been so long turned over and revolved in his mind, that he had an expression for each in all its varied aspects and important relations. Hence one peculiarity of his writings, is that they contain so many of what might be called abstracts or summaries of important truths, which present you at a glance with the beginning, middle, and end of that which it may take years and ages to evolve. Oftentimes these abstracts of truth contain in the compass of a single sentence, a whole system of theology. Thus you will often find in one sentence the whole history of our race, or the whole plan of redemption, or the whole duty of a believer,—and you may study it, and turn it over and over, and ponder it again and again, and you will even find more and more meaning evolved from it. Of this class of comprehensive truths, is the verse selected for the text. It is itself an abstract or compend of several preceding verses, and if you will look at it you will see that it comprises in its brief clauses, the whole history of every believer, through every stage of his existence. *Thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, an heir of God through Christ.* Lend me then your attention while attempting to follow in the path marked by the apostle, and to describe the condition of the believer, in the several stages of servitude or slavery to sin and the law, of sonship to God in this world, and of his heirship of glory in heaven.

I. *Thou art no more a servant.* If you are *no more a servant*, it must follow that you were once a servant. Look back to that time. It is not long that the most experienced of you in the ways of truth, have been Christ's servants, and before you became his servants, you were in bondage—and oh what a fearful bondage it was!

(1.) You were in bondage to sin. You came into this world with the load of Adam's sin imputed to you. You had a heart that went astray from the womb, speaking lies so soon as you were born. Your inbred sin grew up with your growth, and

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strengthened with your strength, and it showed itself in innumerable actual transgressions, the thoughts, and words, and deeds of the willing slave of sin. How deep was that slavery! You are the Lord's freeman now, and yet though the fetters have been unloosed, they are not yet gone, and the marks of the iron that sunk into your soul are still remaining. Which of you does not even yet find reason to adopt but too often the apostle's complaint, *I am carnal, sold under sin. I find a law, that even when I would do good evil is present with me,* Rom. vii. 14, 21. If the traces of your slavery are still so strong, if the galling fetters have now their mark so deep, that they even yet remain, oh what must have been that state of slavery itself?

(2.) You were in slavery to Satan and the world. The God of this world had taken possession of you. You were the captives of Satan at his will. You were the captives of the strong man, and the prey of the mighty and terrible one, who, *armed* at all points, kept his house, and his goods more in peace. He had blinded your eyes, and debased your faculties, and enhanced your souls, so that you loved his service, and hugged your chains, and spurned the offers of those who would deliver you. You were *in bondage under the elements of this world,* Gal. iv. 3, ensnared by its allurements, enticed by the hopes of its rewards, and in mortal fear of its frowns.

(3.) Above all you were in bondage to the law, with its terrific claims. Bad enough was the servitude to your own sins, and the willing slavery to Satan, but all these were not so terrible as the bondage to the law of God. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,* Heb. x. 31. When God merely announced his law, amidst the flame and smoke of Sinai, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, the spectacle was too awful for Israel to behold, *and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake,* Heb. xii. 21. But your situation was far more terrible than that of Israel or Moses. They only heard the law, and had it propounded for their obedience, but you had already broken it in every one of its requirements, and now the law met you with the drawn sword of God, and his voice of thunder, and exclaimed, *Pay me that thou owest!* Alas! what had you wherewith to pay? What was there to prevent the dreadful sentence, *Sell him, and all that he hath, and deliver him to the tormentors till the debt should be paid?* Matt. xviii. 34. Were you not *all your lives in bondage through fear of death?* Heb. ii. 15. Did you

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not tremble at the thought of judgment and eternity? And even when you succeeded in banishing these gloomy thoughts, were not your minds still uneasy—like the troubled sea that could not rest?

Ye were servants, bondsmen. You were working for wages, *for the wages of sin is death*, Rom. vii. 23. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and a hireling looketh for the reward of his work, so you, though you desired it not, and would have fled from it had you known it, were hastening to that fearful retribution of everlasting chains and darkness, reserved for those who are here the servants of sin, Satan, and the fiery law of God.

I merely touch on this point. It was your natural state. God be thanked, though ye were the servants of Satan, *yet ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto you*, Rom. vii. 17, and now, *thou art no more a servant but a son.*

II. This, therefore, leads to the second stage in your spiritual history, *Sonship to God in this world.*

There are many great changes witnessed in the world. The dark and dirty coal is by chemical changes made to assume the transparency, and lustre, and costliness of the diamond. The little seeds that you may hold in the palm of your hand, are by vegetable changes, made to assume the form, and the beauty, and the utility of waving fields of grain, or stately oaks in the forest. By the mysterious changes of animal life, the torpid grub, or inanimate chrysalis, puts on the gay coloring and acquires the life and vigor of the insect state; while the unborn infant is brought forth from the darkness and silence of the womb, to the sports of childhood, the business of riper years, and the solemn expectations of eternity. But all these changes are not so great as the change that passes over the immortal soul—the regeneration of the nature, the new creation which occurs, when any child of Adam becomes a child of God. What a change is this! The prodigal son was willing to become a servant in his father's house, and receive a servant's fare, but you, more degenerate than he, are become sons in the house of God. I know of but one change greater than this. As far as the book of God's providence, or the deeper revelations of his word inform us, the universe has seen but one change more astonishing or more momentous than the change that occurs in every instance of regeneration by grace. The change that I refer to, is that change that was wrought when He, who is the eternal Son of God, and

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thought it no robbery to be equal with God, laid aside all his glory, and exchanged it for the veil of our inferior clay. That change, my brethren, was greater than the change that has passed over you, if from servants you are now become sons; and it is to us a matter of peculiar interest, that that change of Christ is the cause of our change from slaves of sin to sons of God. It is so announced to us by the apostle in the words that precede the text. After speaking in the first verses of the chapter, of our servitude, and bondage under the elements of this world, he adds, *But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law*, Gal. iv. 4. There you have it, brethren, the way in which you were redeemed from that bitter servitude of which mention has been made. Israel, in old time, were held in bondage in Egypt, and they were redeemed from it by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm. You were held in a sorer bondage than they, but you were redeemed from it by one who submitted to a deeper bondage than yours, and instead of stretching out an arm clothed with thunder, he bowed his own back to the stroke, and from shame and spitting withheld not his own face. He met the law of God which came to execute its vengeance on you, and in his own person bare its heavy penalties, and in his own soul, drank to the very dregs its bitterest cup. He submitted to all the temptations and trials under which you so often give way, but painful as they were to his holy soul, they left no stain there. He suffered Satan to exert all his malice on him, and gave himself up to wicked men, and in sign of the deepest ignominy, suffered the death of the cross which only slaves and the vilest malefactors endured. Thus were you redeemed from under the law. Oh, think on the price paid for your ransom, and when you sit at the Lord's table, think on it too. But not merely did he wish *to redeem you from the servitude and the curse of the law.* He had a further object in view, to wit: that we *might receive the adoption of sons.* Those who are justified by faith on the Son of God, are by his grace received into the family of God, and become entitled to all the privileges of the sons of God. *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.* And therefore, *Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father!* Gal. iv. 6. What is this spirit of adoption? Ye who are parents, or who have the care of little children, ought to know it well. It is the spirit of a child. It is the unreserved confidence a

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child feels when in the arms of its parents. Its affections are centred on them, its happiness is found in their presence. It matters little to the child where its home is, provided its mother be there, and when wearied with its play it can lay its head on her bosom and sleep, though surrounded by strangers, though lost in the wilderness, or though tossed on the sea.

It is not many months since I held a little child in my arms. It was in a strange house, and had been among strangers,—its parents had left it with me for awhile,—it had leaned back its head, and was gone to sleep, and I bent over it and marked its quiet features, and its calm breathing, with an almost painful interest, for I thought, "Thus should the Christian repose in the arms of his God. It matters not where his lot may be cast, it matters not who may be his companions, or what may be his solitude, still should he feel that the everlasting arms are around him, and quietly should he rest on the bosom of his God."

Thou art no more a servant but a son. Have you considered that relation, my brethren? Are you aware of what sonship supposes? How many there are who seem to forget one almost essential condition in sonship. I have seen many Christians, but as yet have seen none exempt from trials and afflictions. These afflictions have been very various; some have affected property, and some have affected friends, and some have affected bodily health, and some have affected mental pursuits, and some have affected spiritual enjoyments. But amidst all those thus afflicted, it has been my lot to meet with very few who did not more or less indulge in complaints, and in comparison of their state as being harder to endure than that of some of their neighbors. Why brethren, how is this? Did you not know that trials are a part of your portion here? *What son is he whom his Father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons*, Heb. xii. 8, and yet you are complaining because you are called to endure that, without which you could scarcely have any evidence that you are no more a servant but a son! Oh, how many there are, who give little evidence of their being sons, except that melancholy one, of grieving by their waywardness and faults, the Father whose every thought to them is love! *Heaviness to her that bare us, and grief to our fathers*, Prov. x. 1, are too often the consequences of the courses of children of earthly parents, but surely the spirit of adoption given us by our heavenly Father, does not produce

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such *bitterness*, as this. Search yourselves, then, my brethren, and see to it, that the spirit of adoption, of which you trust you partake, leads you to unreserved consecration of yourselves to God, of happy acquiescence in his will, of esteem for his service, of hearty diligence in doing his will. He is an idle and thriftless son who spends the years of his minority in folly or dissipation. Ye are sons, and if sons should imitate the conduct of that *elder brother*, who even in childhood, said he *must be about his Father's business*, Luke ii. 49, and *whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his Father in heaven*, John iv. 34.

III. But leaving this copious subject, the sonship of God's children in this world, let us attend to the last thing held up before us in the text. *No more a servant but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.* Have you ever considered the full import of the words *an heir of God?* I do not ask, "Are you familiar with these words?" Of course you are. But do you know what they mean? An heir is one who receives an inheritance by descent from his ancestors. In the Jewish law, no property was so secure and valuable as that received by inheritance, for it could not be alienated; and even if sold away, the year of jubilee was sure to bring it back again. The possession of the inheritance, as you are aware, accrued to the heir on the death of the testator; and ye who are sons of God, are heirs of God by Jesus Christ, who has died for you, and left you a testament, sealed with his own blood. And lest you should forget your title to your inheritance, he appointed the ordinance of the Lord's supper, in which the wine in the cup represents the New Testament in his blood, which is shed for you.

Thus then you are heirs of God, and the testament is in your hands. Open it and see the possessions that are left and reserved for you. You are of course aware that the mere fact of your being an heir, does not specify how much of your father's property you are to receive. Some heirs enjoy the whole inheritance, while others are granted but a very small portion of what their fathers possessed. Hence the interest manifested to have the will opened, and to hear the disposition of the estate, and the portion each one is to receive. Have you ever inquired what portion is allotted to you in this precious testament? Let us look through it, and see if we cannot find something to inform us. Here in Gal. iii. 29, we read, *And if you be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* What promise? If I mis-

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take not, the apostle here refers to all those promises made to Abraham which in Rom. iv. 3 he characterizes as the promise, *that he should be heir of the world.* This is a very large promise. Men of the world toil for a very small portion of its wealth, and a single one of its many kingdoms would satisfy the desires of most men. But much more than this world is promised you, for in 1 Cor. iii. 22, we read, *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come, all are yours.* And so we read in Rev. xxi. 7, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* There is no obscurity here. The testament is clear and explicit; the inheritance is large, and if it seem not well defined, it is only because our limited faculties are unable to grasp its dimensions. *Thou art no more a servant but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God in Christ Jesus.*

Look over your inheritance, my brethren. Be as Abraham when God said to him, *Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee,* Gen. xiii. 14–17.

What a glorious inheritance is yours! an *heir of God!* Look abroad over your inheritance. Look not alone on the flesh-pots of Egypt—these trifles that delight men's hearts. If you are a Christian, it is your deliberate choice, that you prefer to be poor and afflicted here, and exposed to every variety of trials, if you may win heaven at last, rather than be rich and prosperous and free from care, and finally share with the rich man his torment in that flame where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. But have you really lost anything by your choice? Has not the "earnest money," so to speak, been faithfully paid to you? Are you not perfectly sure that an inheritance far more glorious than your brightest and fondest expectations is laid up in store, and reserved for you and every one who truly makes this choice? But perhaps the great fault with you is, that you have no very clear idea of what the inheritance is. It seems to you very far off, and your poor weak eyes, dimmed by your former hard bondage to sin, and it may be even yet partially blinded by your fear of the law, cannot see its glories. It may seem so. But how know you that it is very far off? For aught you know it may be very near at hand. You think it very far off, and you may be in it to-morrow. *It is not far off.* Some of those who, a year ago, or perhaps two years ago,

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like you thought it was very far away, are in it already. Distress not yourself with the idea of its distance. The day of your *salvation is nearer than when you believed. The night is far spent—the day is at hand*, Rom. xiii. 11, 12.

Oh, brethren, it will take a long day even to go over the inventory of all that is contained in your inheritance. You know the apostle says, *All things are yours.* You know it is said, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things*, Rev. xxi. 7. It is a great pity that our ideas of heavenly things are so indistinct. It is a sad evidence of the depth of our original bondage, that even now, on our journey through this desert to the promised land that flows with milk and honey, we so often cast a longing eye back to *the fish and the onions and the garlic* of Egypt, Num. xi. 5. Lift your eyes above these things to some of those *all things* that are promised you. Look abroad over all of God's possessions. You are heir to all these things. Enumerate them. Why should you not try to form some conception of your estate. You know somewhat of the wonderful discoveries lately made in Astronomy. You know how the far-piercing telescope has sounded into the depths of space, and brought worlds and systems of worlds to our notice, so numerous and vast that the leaf in the forest, the grain of sand in the desert, the drop in the ocean, seem of more importance in their several places than our whole world, compared with these vast continents of stars. Who shall count their numbers? Who shall number their riches? Who shall describe the displays of God's glory they contain? Brethren, all these are yours. Yours to behold, yours to admire, yours to delight in, yours to serve God in, if it please him to send you there, or it be best for you that you go there. But perhaps you desire some post nearer to the throne of God. Perhaps you wish to stand in his immediate presence, clothed in that pure white robe, wearing that amaranthine crown, singing that new song, to the music of those heavenly harps. Be it so. This, too, is yours. Perhaps you wish an entire freedom from sin, a perfect sanctification of your nature, an entire transformation into the likeness of God. Be it so. This, too, is yours. For *we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Perhaps you wish to stand by the fountain of life, quaffing in its ever flowing streams, and feeling your heart expanding with sensations of unutterable love and joy, as the beams of a Father's reconciled

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face shine into your souls forever and ever. It is a high thing you desire, but be it so, even this is yours.

In the bosom of bliss, and the throned light of light, you shall be the sons of God. For our Saviour says, *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*, Rev. iii. 21.

Brethren, a word with you, in your inmost hearts. How came you up hither? We found you in the beginning of our discourse sunk in a slavery too horrible to think of. We leave you set upon a throne and enjoying a happiness, which human language does not express. How came you up hither? But the reason is very plain. The apostle gives it in the text, *Thou art an heir of God through Christ.* This is the reason. You from servants are become sons and heirs of God, because Christ from a son became a servant. He went down from his high throne in glory to your mean estate, that he might raise you up to sit with him on his throne. You have gone up the steps that Christ went down. Oh how many reflections crowd upon the mind, as we think of all his grace and love! How cheerfully he bore that load, and carried that cross under which we groan and grieve so much. Yet it was hard work to go down as he did, far harder than for us to come up, for though our old masters often strive to pull us back, yet his grace lightens our load, and lends us many a helping hand, aye, more than a helping hand. Remember ye not, how the Lord found you in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness? he led you about, he instructed you, he kept you as the apple of his eye. *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead you*, Deut. xxxii. 9–11.

Having this inheritance in view, will you ever complain any more over your present wants, and trials? Will you not *reckon* with the apostle, *that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us?* Rom. viii. 18.

May God grant, beloved hearers, that you and I may persevere unto the end, and enter at last on the rest that remaineth for the people of God, and the inheritance that shall be given to his sons!

Niagro, March 14, 1847.

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SERMON XLVIII

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

What think ye of Christ?—MATT. xxii. 43.

THESE words were spoken by our Saviour to the Jews, in order to lead them to consider the testimony of their own Scriptures respecting himself. How true were the words of Simeon, *He was set or appointed, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed*, Luke ii. 35. Witness the doubts and questions of the Jews, as they inquired who he was, whether Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Elijah, or the risen Baptist, or one of the old prophets, or *he that should come?* But not merely while on the earth was he the object of anxious interest and inquiry. Long lines of prophecy pointed to him, commencing from the day when the darkness of the fall was relieved by the light that beamed forth from the announcement of the woman's seed. Abraham rejoiced to see his day. David spoke of him. Isaiah saw his glory, and *all the prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. And not alone by holy men were thoughts of Christ exercised. It is no exaggeration but simple truth to say that from the throne of God on high, to the lowest depths of hell beneath, there is no being created or uncreated, to whom it is not a question of the deepest interest, *What thinkest thou of Christ?* Let us then consider what is thought of Christ by the different orders of intelligent and moral beings, with whose existence and nature the Bible makes us acquainted.

We might commence our inquiries with Him who is from everlasting to everlasting, but let us rather first ask what is thought of Christ, by those beings the deepest sunk in sin, and the most miserable whom the universe contains. That old serpent the devil, with his legions of fallen angels were once glorious

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and happy inhabitants of the upper sanctuary. They might have continued there through unending ages, amidst ever increasing felicities, but sin entered in, how, we know not, and they fell.

"From the bosom of bliss—to the bottomless deep." How long they remained in their dark prison-house before our world was created it does not concern us to know. We are first informed of their existence and nature in the sad story of our first parents' fall, but blessed be God, the same page which tells us of this arch enemy's too successful wiles, tells us also of one *stronger than he*, who shall yet *bruise the serpent's head*, and *tread Satan under our feet*. For a time it may be, Satan thought his triumph was complete. He saw our first parents seduced into his snares, and his hellish heart rejoiced in the expectation that they and all their posterity should follow him to his gloomy dungeon. But how must he have been amazed when he heard, amidst the thunders of the curse upon his head, the announcement of the seed of the woman who was to *deliver the captives of the mighty and the prey of the terrible one*, Is. xlix. 25. From that time we may suppose him to look with the most anxious curiosity for new revelations of Him that should come. He would scan every prophecy —he would mark every providence—he would *go to and fro through the earth and walk up and down in it*, Job i. 7, to learn more of Him whom he had so much reason to fear. Something he must have known well, but it seems to have pleased God to keep him in a most perplexing state of ignorance and partial information, in consequence of which every scheme he tried to avert the threatened danger only reverted with redoubled force on his own devoted head. When Christ was born, Satan's malice and power were exerted with increased zeal. He sought to slay him in infancy. He dogged his steps through life. Though he heard the voice from heaven proclaim, *This is my beloved Son*, yet immediately afterwards he dared to spread his temptations before him, and even asked him *to fall down and worship him*, Matt. iv.

Fellow-Christian, beware of this great adversary. He who tempted your Lord, will not spare you. He followed our Lord with temptations all his life. He set wicked men on to deeds of the foulest wickedness. He taught them to despise, to scorn, to reproach, to revile, to persecute, and to slay the Lord of life and glory. When the close of our Saviour's life approached, the malice and exertions of the devil seem to have been redoubled,

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and the sacred historian informs us of one fact which sets this before us in the clearest light. You are aware that in the days when our Lord tabernacled in flesh, many men were possessed with devils. In all these cases, however, they were inferior spirits of evil who entered into the bodies of the men they tormented. You are aware that, in the original Greek, they were δαιμονεοι, demons, by whom these unhappy men were possessed. The διαβολος, the devil himself, is not said to have entered into any person. But when the time came that Christ was to be delivered up, by the hand of one of his own disciples, the devil would trust none of his inferior angels to spirit on the wretched man to the deed. The case was too important to entrust to any subordinate. Not merely did the devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray him, John xiii. 2. The evangelists Luke and John tell us expressly, that *Satan entered into him*, Luke xxii. 3, John xiii. 27. He felt that his kingdom depended on the move then about to be made, and no malice or power that hell could muster was wanting in the hour of conflict. You know the result. To the devil it may have seemed that the victory was gained, when he saw the Saviour expire on the cross—saw the spear enter his heart, and his body laid in its cold and silent grave. In all this, my brethren, you see a part of what Satan thought of Christ. You see the length to which he would go in his hatred and opposition, and may suppose that his heart was filled with exultation as he saw his deep-laid schemes prosper, and he against whom he plotted laid low in death.

But Satan had other thoughts of Christ than those of malice. Deep as was his hatred of our Lord, it could not have been deeper than his fear. He must have ever felt when in his presence that he stood before his superior, and though at times he raged like a wild bull, or a monster of the deep, yet ever and anon, he felt the *hook in his nose, and the bridle in his lips*, and, however unwillingly, was forced *to turn back by the way in which he came*, Is. xxxvii. 29.

It is most instructive to note the conduct of our Lord toward this arch-enemy. You find, in all the New Testament, not the slightest trace that our Saviour ever feared him. With what a majestic, yet calm and holy serenity, he ever speaks to, or of him! For wise and holy purposes, he suffered his presence and endured his temptations, and felt the utmost stretch of his malice; but all with unalterable calmness and self-possession. When he pleased,

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he could say to the bold intruder, *Get thee behind me*—and Satan obeyed. One after another as the victims of Satan's power were brought to his notice, he loosed their bands—opening the closed ear, loosing the tied tongue, making straight the long bent body, driving out the entrenched foe, and proclaiming himself the sovereign Lord. Devils trembled in his presence. *What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I beseech thee, torment me not. I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God*, Luke iv. 34. These were the testimonies that his presence extorted from them. Yea, though a legion of evil spirits had entered into one man, yet must they all obey his solitary word—and beseech him not to *command them to go out into the deep*, Luke viii. 31; and such became their terror when he appeared, that at the last *he suffered them not to speak. They knew that he was the Christ*, Luke iv. 41.

If such the fear the devils had of Christ, when he came *not to judge, but to suffer*, what will it be when he shall come not to suffer, but to judge? He will come, he will judge them, he will sentence them, and confine them forever in everlasting chains and darkness. They know it well, and fear and hate him too. Therefore, my brethren, while you be on your guard against the devil, and watch and be vigilant lest he devour you, yet may you comfort your hearts with the joyful truth, that, if ye resist the devil, he must flee from you, and however much he may harass you now, yet assuredly *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*, Rom. xvi. 20, and in your home in the skies you shall never, never again be troubled with his devices.

Ye are of your father, the devil, and the works of your father ye will do, were words that our Lord once addressed to men clothed in flesh and blood like ourselves, and who thought themselves as good as other men, and as likely to enter heaven. These words embody a truth of fearful moment. They are a part of those solemn teachings of our Lord, in which he tells us that there are but two classes of men in the world. To most men it seems that the variety of moral character in the world is almost infinite, but to the eye of God, every son and daughter of Adam is arrayed in one or other of two bands, and the answer to the question, *What thinkest thou of Christ?* decides to which of them you belong. The Bible acknowledges only the distinction between *the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent*—the children of God, and the children of the devil. The Saviour tells us of those that are

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for him, and those that are *against him;* and the apostle, with a solemnity that reminds us of the judgment-day, says to us, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha, the Lord cometh*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. These testimonies of the Scripture lead us with sufficient clearness to the conclusion, that all the thoughts of the men of this world respecting Christ, are either those of opposition or of love. There is no middle ground. There may be various degrees of opposition, as there are various degrees of love, but to one or other of these classes must all men belong.

Leaving out of view, for the present, the vast mass of our fellow-men who have never heard of Christ, and who, therefore, will not be judged by his gospel, we may confine our inquiry solely to those who live in Christian lands, and are nominal professors of the faith of Christ. If we ask, then, *What think ye of Christ?* what answer shall we get? It may be remarked here, that no right thoughts of Christ are ever held, except as taught by the Holy Spirit, whose great office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men. But many of those who profess the name of Christ, are not taught by the Spirit of God. What thoughts can such as these have of Christ? They may think of him as some eminent teacher, but as to any further or soul-saving knowledge of him, they are utterly destitute.

There is again another class, and it is also large, who possess a tolerably accurate and extensive knowledge of the doctrines respecting Christ, and of the facts of his history, but their knowledge is all speculative and dead. There are, again, those who look on Christ with veneration and esteem, as the young ruler did, and would gladly learn what they must do to be saved; but when it comes to the strict command, *Sell all that thou hast, take up the cross, and follow him*, Matt. xix. 21, it is more than they can do, and they go away sorrowful—not, be it observed, sorrowful because they do not love Christ, but sorrowful because they cannot love Christ and the world too. Now most of the persons just referred to are very loth to acknowledge themselves the opposers and the enemies of Christ, and when we bring the charge home upon them, they are apt to deny it, and even with apparent indignation. But what saith the Scripture? *He that is not with, is against.* Even by your own showing, you are not with Christ, for you reject his yoke as one too heavy to bear, and his laws as too strict to be observed. You stand aloof from the church of

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God, you shut your eyes to your own danger, and your ears to the warnings that you hear. You turn away from the service of the Saviour, and prefer the gratification of your own appetites and desires to the narrow path of self-denial and obedience. Your answer therefore to the question, *What think ye of Christ?* is sufficiently obvious. You say in effect, and you act it in your lives, We see no great beauty in Christ, nor desirableness in his service. For ourselves, we prefer to seek first the things of this world, and to feast ourselves on its pleasures. If at the last it must be so, then will we endeavor at the end of our days to become religious enough to get to heaven. Alas, my impenitent friends! it is very plain what you think of Christ. *To you he is a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form or comeliness, and when you see him, there is no beauty in him that you should desire him*, Is. liii. 2. You are not the friends of Christ, and though you do not openly oppose him, it is because you prefer a negative opposition, a mere neglect, to open hostility. But this plea will not avail you—*How shall you escape, if you neglect this great salvation?* Heb. ii. 3. But all the opposers of Christ are not satisfied with this mere negative opposition and disregard. There are many, who, in answer to the question, *What think ye of Christ?* show themselves most plainly to be the children of the devil. I refer here to all who openly despise the religion and persecute the followers of Christ, and by persecution. I mean not simply that outward form which torments the bodies of its victims, but that more polished style, which satisfies itself with ridicule, and jest, and scorn, and plumes itself on being too liberal-minded to be entrammelled with *old wives' fables*, and *silly superstitions*, as many vainly speak. In this class of open opposers must be ranged all those who reject any part of God's revelation, or who set themselves against any of its truths, and especially the truths that refer more directly to the Saviour. How fearful it is to hear the blasphemies that some men utter against the Lord of glory! strange that any can allow themselves to utter a word against him, whose every word was kindness, and every thought was love. And yet who knows not that in our own days there are organized bands of men, whose chief object is to put down every remembrance of Christ, and whose chief glory is in their success in turning any away from the service of the Saviour. Verily all such are of their father the devil, and the works of their father they do. But my impenitent and unbelieving hearers, wherein do you differ from them? As

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long as you have not enrolled yourselves on the Lord's side, you are, in accordance with his own declaration, among his enemies, and there is nothing but the restraints of his providence, in the circumstances of your early education and companions, and the unseen influences of his common grace, that prevents you from joining with these bold opposers. And let me tell you, as I do with all sadness, and with the hope that it may lead you to reflection and repentance, that unless you repent and come out boldly on the Lord's side, the time is not far distant when you will be visibly associated even with the vilest of those who now profane the name of Christ. Yea, the time is not distant—but may God grant you grace to escape it—when you must take up your portion with the spirits of the lost, and join with them in execrations on the name of Jesus, every execration only sinking you deeper in sin, and heaping added misery on your own heads. Oh turn ye, why will ye die? There is yet time for repentance, there is yet room for hope. Do not, I beseech you, as you value your own immortal souls, do not longer run the fearful risk of being numbered with those who when they hear the question, *What think ye of Christ?* are forced to gnash their teeth in bitter sorrow and unavailing remorse. It will be a part, and one of the bitterest parts, of the pains of hell, to think of Christ and his salvation, to see how lovely he is, and yet hate him for that loveliness as Satan does.

From this painful subject let us turn to contemplate a more pleasing picture. We have seen that altogether lovely as Christ is, there are yet beings in our universe so miserable and so vile that they hate his very loveliness. It is yet more painful to reflect, that we ourselves are acquainted and in daily association with many, who, however their real feelings may lie buried now, will yet one day hate him as bitterly as any atheist that ever lived. How fearful a thing must sin be, that can produce a result so horrible as this. It extracts deadly poison from the fairest flowers, it changes honey into gall, it defaces God's image in his creatures, it defiles God's beauty in his works, it hurls its envenomed shafts alike against the throne of the Almighty, and against the son of his love, it rushes madly on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, and even when bound in chains and everlasting darkness, it vents its spite in rage and hatred against heaven. And this sin, this fearful thing, my Christian hearers, it dwells in your bosom and in mine, and there is nothing but di-

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vine grace that can prevent it showing its nature and working its purposes, as fully in you and me, as in Voltaire, or Paine, or even in the spirits of darkness themselves. *Oh who shall deliver us from this body of death? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

To one who knew nothing of sin, it would seem incredible that it can extend to such fearful depths of iniquity. To one who has seen sin, it seems well nigh incredible that the sinner can ever be changed and made a friend of God. But the wondrous grace of Christ—that grace which brought him from his throne in the heavens to the cross and the grave—that grace can accomplish it. It can reach beneath the lowest depth of sin, and exalt him who had been a blasphemer to the highest seat in glory, *putting a new song into his mouth, even praise to our God.* It can so change the hard and stubborn heart, that he who verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, shall become a preacher of the faith he once destroyed. Let us then consider what they think of Christ, who by his grace are rescued from the fearful state of misery and sin in which we all find ourselves by nature, Eph. ii. 3. I shall not stop to ask what is thought of Christ by the cold formalist, who has put on the outward robe of a profession of religion, but whose heart never beat at the mention of his name. Nor shall I delay to ask what those think of Christ, who, though charity may hope they are really his servants, yet give but feeble evidences of their love to him. Let us rather ask what they think who know him best, and have lived in the nearest intercourse and communion with him? What do they think of Christ, who are held up to the church—not for her worship as part mediators with Christ, but as examples whom we are to follow in so far as they followed him? Look at the apostles, who followed Christ in his tribulations, and shall sit on thrones in the regeneration. Even while poor and despised by men, they could say, *We believe and are sure that thou art the Son of God,* John vi. 69. With what veneration did the favored disciples look on him when they saw him transfigured in the mount! With what astonishment when they saw him quell the boisterous winds, and calm the raging waves! With what admiration, as they saw the few loaves multiply, till the wants of assembled thousands were satisfied! How did they hang on his lips, and mark his words, and treasure up his sayings! When sadness overwhelmed his

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soul, how did they fall back in solemn awe, fearing to intrude into the mysteries they could not comprehend. Listen to the voice of the ardent Peter—*I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death*, Luke xxii. 33, *likewise also said they all*, Matt. xiv. 31. This was no empty boast. Although (alas for the frailty of man) even Peter, in an hour of Satan's active malice, denied his Lord, and all the disciples forsook him and fled, yet the denial was but for a moment, the desertion was but for a time, bitter tears were shed for the one, long devotion came after the other, and the lives of one and all, and their triumphant deaths by the sword or the stones of the multitude, or the inverted cross, all showed that for his sake they counted not their lives dear unto them. Listen to Thomas, when the last remnant of unbelief is removed from his mind, and he exclaims *My Lord and my God*, John xx. 28, or the beloved disciple, the only one of that little band who escaped a violent death, as he closes the inspired volume with those words of earnest faith and strong desire, *Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20.

From these examples it is not hard to gather what the apostles thought of Christ. But let us consider a little more particularly what he thought of Christ, who, more than any of the apostles, is held up for our example, and to whose pen we owe nearly one half of the New Testament—*Saul of Tarsus, who is also called Paul.*

What this once bitter persecutor, and afterwards zealous and successful preacher of the gospel, thought of Christ, is easily gathered both from his actions and his words; and may be seen alike in what he gave up for Christ, in what he did for him, in what he endured for his sake, and in what he hoped for from him.

We know not much of the early history of Paul. He is first brought to our notice in the martyrdom of Stephen, to whose death he was *consenting*. He was a citizen of Tarsus, no mean city, enjoyed the privileges of a Roman citizen by birth, was read in Grecian literature, was thoroughly instructed in Jewish lore, being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and every privilege that a Hebrew could boast was his. Distinguished by his zeal for Judaism, he early gained the confidence of the high priest and elders of the nation. What brighter prospects than these could he have or desire? for his ambition, be it observed, was not for money, or ease, or luxury. He had higher aims, being zealous

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for the law of God, in the only nation where that law was known, and his breathing out slaughter and vengeance against the followers of Christ, was but acting as he in conscience verily thought he ought to act. But in a moment how changed is the scene! He hath seen the Lord, he hath heard his voice, he hath received his baptism, and now what becomes of his birth and learning, his Jewish descent and privileges—the things that were gain to him? Hear his own words, *What things were given to me those I counted loss for Christ.* His was no empty boast, or futile aspiration of a retired scholar in his study, who in his dreams builds airy castles, and forms high resolutions, which his sober waking thoughts do not enable him to carry out, for the apostle further says, *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*, Phil. iii. 7, 8. Such were what Paul gave up for Christ. Do you ask what he did for him? Take the map and follow him in all his journeys and voyages, now beating along the Syrian coasts, now boldly venturing out on the bosom of the Mediterranean sea, now going a foot from one place to another, visiting and visiting again the churches he had formed, his own hands ministering to his necessities the while. See him preaching Christ alike in Jerusalem and Damascus, in Antioch and Ephesus, in Corinth and in Rome, on the ship's deck, in the private room, to a few women, or to the Epicureans and Sophists. Hear him say, *From Jerusalem round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, and I am ready to preach to you that are in Rome also*, Rom. xiv. 19. And where did he preach? Not merely from well-lined pulpits to polished audiences sitting in comfortable pews, reaping the fruit of other men's labor and toil. No, it was his ambition to preach Christ where his name had not before been heard, and in his zeal he proclaimed himself debtor to the barbarian and the Greek, and ready to become all things to all men, if he might by any means save some. All these labors were performed amidst the endurance of sufferings and privations that might appal a giant, or task an angel's strength. He knew that *in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him*, Acts xx. 13, yet still went he forth to his work. He had been told *how great things he must suffer for the name of Jesus*, Acts ix. 16, yet still he was undismayed. Full six years before he lost his life by the Roman sword, and before he had endured any of the trials of his long imprisonment in Judea,

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or the perils and discomforts of his voyage to Italy, or the wearisome chain with which, for two years, he was bound in Rome, he wrote to the Corinthians in these words, *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches*, 2 Cor. xi. 24–28. Did all these things appal him, or make him think less of Christ? Far from it, for he says, *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Gal. vi. 14. Did all these things weary him of the service, or lessen his love of the Saviour? Far, far from it. Look through his epistles. Did it ever occur to you to note how often he uses the name of Christ? Not merely is it in the beginning and the end of every epistle,—not merely is it the main subject of his writing, but you can hardly find a sentence in some of the epistles, in which that beloved name does not occur. How well might he have said,

"Jesus! I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to mine ear,
Fain would I sound it out aloud
That heaven and earth might hear."

And how truly might he have added, in the words of another hymn,

"Dear name! the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding-place,
My never failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace."

These were what Paul gave up for Christ, these were what he did and endured for him. It were long to enumerate all he hoped for from him, but he himself has given an abstract both of what he did for Christ, and of what he hoped for from him. Writing to Timothy he says, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing*, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

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I will not weaken with words the impression left on your minds of what the apostle Paul thought of Christ, but I would simply ask you in how far you can subscribe to what he has said? Surely your hearts must respond to his words, and you must feel that neither did he give up too much, nor do too much, nor suffer too much for Christ, nor hope for too much from him.

Bright angels in heaven, and ye spirits of the just made perfect, who cast your crowns at his feet, what think ye of Christ! Oh brethren, would that we could hear the songs of the upper sanctuary! Would that we could see the throngs who stand upon the sea of glass with the harps of God. They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. But this sight is reserved; if we are his we shall not only heart hose songs, but shall ourselves join that triumphant throng. In the meantime it is not forbidden to us to read of the angel visits made from the paradise above. They looked forward to his birth with an eagerness even greater than that of men. Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, came down to announce the birth of his forerunner, and came down again to salute the virgin mother of our Lord. Angel bands flew down to the earth when he was born. They watched over him, they ministered unto him. Moses and Elijah came from their thrones above to talk with him on the holy Mount. Angels were ever around his path. He had but to speak and more than twelve legions of angels would appear. Did it ever occur to you to ask what that angel thought of Christ, who stood by him in his hour of agony in the garden?—or what he thought who came to roll away the stone from the sepulchre? It was a festival day in heaven when Christ rose again from the dead. White-robed angels came down to tell the news to the weeping disciples;· and angels stood by when a cloud received him out of their sight.

The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them as in Sinai in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them, Ps. lxviii. 17, 18. The angels delight to look into these things. They are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. There may be some of them present in this room now, wondering why we think so little of Christ. Listen to the voice of the apostle John, *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the*

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beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honor and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever, Rev. v. 11–14.

May we now with all reverence, humbly ask—What doth God the everlasting Father think of his son Jesus Christ? Brethren, I fear to approach this part of our subject. My words and your thoughts alike must fall so utterly short, that it is but darkening counsel by words without knowledge to attempt to answer the question. It cannot be done save in the words of inspiration themselves, and to these I refer you.

In Prov. viii. 22–31, *The Lord possesseth me in the beginning of his way, before ever the earth was, then was I by him as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth;* (and oh, how gracious are these words) *and my delights were with the sons of men.*

In the account of the baptism of Christ, Matt. iii. 16, 17, *Lo, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo! a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

In the account of the transfiguration of Christ, Luke ix. 34, 35, a cloud overshadowed them and there came a voice out of the cloud saying, *This is my beloved Son: hear him.*

In this connection let me simply repeat to you the words of Christ, *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16.

And now as a final answer to the question, *What think ye of Christ?* Take these words of our Saviour, *No man knoweth the Son but the Father.* But though it be so, yet still he says to each of us, *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 27, 28.

SHANGHAI, July 11, 1847.

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SERMON TO THE CHINESE.

TE NYOH TSZ' YING VUH. THE PUNISHMENT OF HELL.

KUH leang nyieh, alla ting mung yew-ho nying kong kuh tsung jeangdaou, fuh che tsa le-hai. Hai yang le kaw jŏh ghen fuh che to seaou tsăh soo yaou yew-ho dung-deen. Jeang-daou fuh che tsa wah. Kuh tsō-sang-e-go ghen, ya m'na zoh ghe-ya m'na hae ghe-soh-e m'na haou lō-leă-ghe. Wae yew, kuh sz' van wong fă. 'Ng waw kuh tsa lung fă ne?

Kwoon foo tong kae chuh kaw-lŏ-lai; yaou kaw ying vŭh. Hŏ-tsea yaou tsan-tsan ghe-gŏ deeu—hŏ-tsea yaou tang-tang ghe. Nying kaw ko-ko waw tong kae sz'-ka-gŏ. Puh foo, kung paw kwoon foo vay kaw jŏh? Kuh sz'-kane nan lung. Wy yew-ngoh keen nying van wong fă—hŏ-tsea săh nying-kaw, hŏ-tsea toeu tung-se, kuh-sing wah sz'-kane: nying kaw too sz' ka wa—"kuh sz' m'daou-le-gŏ nying, tsung yaou kaw jŏh, tsung yaou vŭh ghe." Alla ting-mung nying sz' ka waw. Shih-waw sz' ka gŏ.

AT this time we hear everybody talking about the pirates, they are so numerous. A large number of vessels at sea have already been captured by them. The merchant vessels neither reviled them nor injured them, so that they had no excuse for seizing them. Besides, in so doing they violate the laws of the empire. You will say, what is to be done then?

The officers ought to go out and seize them and punish them. They should behead them or punish them by whipping. Every one will say that they deserve thus to be punished. But suppose the officers are not able to take them? This is a difficult matter. Again—we see that if a man violates the imperial law—whether he commits murder or is guilty of theft—or similar crimes, all men will say, That is a man destitute of principle, he should undoubtedly be seized and punished. When we hear men say this we agree

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Puh foo, alla too-be leite tsăng, nying kaw-tsa way lung tsung waw—"m'daou-le-gŏ nying, van zay nying tong kae seu ying-vŭh?" Kuh tsa kong kew? Sŏ sz'-kane yaou ying-vuh-ghe? Ngoh waw—sz' ying way tsō kuh-tsung sz'-kane pung lai sz' wah sz'-kane. Yaou tsō tong kae seu ying vŭh. Wae yew—tsō wah sz'-kane, kuh sz' van wong fă, sz' dae-man wong-te, yu kaw yaou ying-vuh ghe. Wae yew, tsō kuh sing sz'-kane ya sz' wah nying kaw; soh-e ya yaou kaw ying vuh. Kuh shih-waw too sz'gŏ. Kulla, ngoh yew ih geen sz'kane, yaou tay ngoh băng yew kaw, waw waw kane.

Koo-sz'-tseen tsing Boo-să zaou chuh she-kan-zong nying do-deh yew-ho haou-choo sz' pŏ ghe, aeu ghe tsing-jing jeă leih pae tsing zhing-daou, m'aou pae kaw Boo-să, m'aou dae-man tsing Boo-să, m'aou lauen pae tsing Boo-să. Wae yew fung-foo ghe, yaou 'heaou jhing voo mau, yaou ae-seih pih nying zeang ae se eang gŏ—m'aou săh, m'aou ying-kane, m'aou tau, m'aou shih hwong, m'aou tane. Kuh sing sz'-kane too sz' tsing Boo-să fung foo nying kaw. Ling nga Boo-să sz' ka waw, "'Ng'nuh nying fuh e ngoh, ng'nuhe yaou van ngoh keae, with them that what they say is perfectly correct. But I think within myself—Why is it that all men say that a man guilty of crime should be punished? I answer—It is because to act in this manner is in its very nature wicked. These things ought not to be done. If such crimes are committed they ought to be punished. Again, to act thus wickedly is to violate the imperial law, and thus to insult the emperor, and for this reason also they ought to be punished. Further—to do these things is to injure men, which is another reason why they ought to be punished. What I say is true. For this reason I have a subject concerning which, my friends, I wish to address you.

Anciently the true God created man. He bestowed upon him many blessings, and commanded him earnestly and constantly to worship the true God. He commanded him also to honor father and mother—to love his neighbor as himself—not to kill—not to commit adultery—not to steal—not to speak falsely—not to covet. He forbade him also to worship false gods, and idols of clay, in contempt of the true God. All these things the true God commanded men. Moreover God said, If you will not obey me, and disregard my command-

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ngoh tsing yaou kaw le-hai ying-vuh pŏ 'ng'nuh." Nan kae tsing 'ng'nuh păng-yew kaw tsăng tsăng, kuh nying kae tsa tsō fă? 'Ng waw, "tsung yaou fuh sze kuh tsing Boo-să. Tsung yaou eghe tsō." Ko-seih nying m'na ka tso fă. Tsung alla te ih kŏ tsoo tsung, ih je lŏ lai taou king nang kae, yew ho nying too eking van-deh zay. Alla kane kane she kan zong nying m'neh ih kŏ nying way ting haou nying kaw. Tsung seaou lai sz'œu, ghe yew zay ko. Kuh sing seaou seaou gŏ nying ya way sang che, ya way tsang zaou, ya way zoh, yah way shih hwong, ya way peen nying. Do che lai, yew kaw yew wah sz'-kane. Alle yew nying 'm zay kō? 'Ng'nuh sing-le tsăng wah sing-dzeang. 'Ng'nuh che paw yew wah shih waw. 'Ng'nuh ke sing zong yew wah sz'-kane. Nying kaw yaou peen nying kaw, kulla, ng'nuh oh-la mung kœu, kae-mung, too yew so, yew shen, kōe sō-haou-leaou, shen-haou-leaou. Nying kaw way shih hwong, hway-pong nying kaw, kulla nyieh nyieh yew nying seang zoh, tsang zaou. Nying kaw way tay nyu-nying aou-tsaou-puh-la tsō wah sz'-kane, woo ghe leaou fuh teh.

Wah yew pih yang ka sz'-kane. Yew nying tsō zaih, tsō jeang daou. Yew nying kaw hae nying ming. Soh e hane-

ment, I will assuredly visit you with severe punishment. Now I request you, my friends, to consider what ought men to do? You will say, All ought to reverence this true God. All ought to obey him. Alas! men have not done so. From our first parents down to this day all men have already committed sin. Of all mankind we see not one that is good. From childhood up all have sin. Little children will show anger—they will quarrel, and curse and lie, and cheat. As they grow up they become worse. Where is there a man that is free from sin? In our hearts we think wicked thoughts. With our mouths we speak wicked words. With our bodies we do wicked deeds. Men deceive and cheat their fellow-men. Our houses must have doors and windows that can be fastened with locks and bars. Men will lie, and will cheat each other, therefore we daily hear them cursing and railing at each other. Men will also with wicked women, commit crimes which cannot be sufficiently hated.

There are besides many other crimes. There are thieves and robbers and murderers. Therefore everywhere there must be

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taou-choo, yew kwoon-foo, yew ane-tsăh-sze, kuh sing, yaou sing pooen, yaou vŭh nying kaw. Soh e tsung ka kane chuh lai, tsung seaou taou do; tsung neen ke laou taou neen ke king, nying kaw too yew zay. Yew sing zay kwooen foo yaou kwoon. Yew-ho zay dondœu kwooen foo fuh chuh kwoon ghe, kwooen foo fuh sheaou-teh sing-le. Ghe tan-chih kane ngameen; soh-e yew-hō zay-ko ghe vay koo-djŏh. Wae yew; yew sing zay nying she-daou dō, kwooen vay kaw djŏh; soh-e m'neh kaw ying-vuh.

Puh foo, say chih kwooen fuh sheaou-teh nying yew zay, ho-tsea vay kaw ying-vuh, zong dœu tsing zhing-daou tsung sheaouteh-gŏ, tsung way vuh ngoh. Ngoh sing-le lai-teh tsung say-been suh-ko sing dzeang ghe tsung sheaou-teh-gŏ. Kulla Boo-să kane kane ngoh sing-le lai-teh tsung wah neen leh, hoh-tsea sing-le tane doo, hoh-tsea sing-le sang che, hoh-tsea sing-le fuh tsung-jing tsing zhingdaou keh too sze zay-che, peh ding yaou seu ying-vuh. Ngoh yaou sheaou-teh gŏ, Boo-să pe wong-te wa do; ghe daou-le pe wong-fă wa neen le, wa yaou king, kulla ngoh nying van zay ghe, dae man ghe, keh sz' 'heih fuh lai: "ŏh nying tsung yew ŏh paou."

officers, judges, &c., to try and to punish the guilty. From what has been said, we see that all men—small and great, old and young—all are sinners. There are some crimes of which the officers take cognizance, but there are also very many crimes of which they can take no cognizance. The officers do not know the heart. They can only see that which is external, so that there are many sins which they cannot bring under their jurisdiction. Moreover, there are some wicked men whose power and influence are so great that the officers dare not bring them to justice.

But although the officers may not know that a man is guilty of crime and so cannot punish him, there is the true God above. He knows it and will not fail to punish. Whatever thoughts we conceive in our hearts he knows. So God sees if I think wicked thoughts, or harbor covetousness or anger, or if I do not reverence the true God. All these are criminal, and will certainly be punished. We ought to know that God is greater than any earthly monarch, and his laws more severe and of more importance than the imperial code. Therefore if men sin against him and treat him with contempt it is inevitable that—"*ŏh nying tsung yew ŏh paou*,"—"the evil must receive an evil recompense."

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Boo-sǎ ying-vuh yew san yang.

(1.) Ih yang sz' lai kin-nan-kan. Yew nying ying-way tsō wah sze-kane ghe ke-sing sang bing. Chŏh tseu chŏh teh tsay, ngoh ke sing fuh shong kwa. Chŏh a-peen ngoh ke-sing yaou sœu. Tay wah nyu nying tso wah sze-kane yaou sang yang may tsong kuh sing.

(2.) Te ne yang, keh sz' ngoh ke-sing yaou se. Kin-nan-kan alla yew-ho nying, too yew zay, too yaou se. Tup-paw yew nying tseang-tung m'neh zay, tseang-tung fuh tsō wah, kuh nying vay se. Kō-seih kuh tsung nying m'neh-gŏ: kulla nying too yaou se. Sang bing! leih-che m'neh-leh; tung-shong! yaou se! tsong tsong! lan woo! m'neh-deh!

(3.) Te san yang ying-vuh, sz' ting le-hai. Ngoh ke sing sang bing, ngoh ke-sing yaou se, kuh leang yang, say chih sing koo-leh-ching, kuh puh foo sz' ke-sing zong sze-kane. Ngoh ke sing le-dœu wae yew keh-kŏ woh-ling, ting paou-pay, ting jang ming. Ke-sing se wŏh-ling vay se, vay lan-woo, sz' tseang-tung lai-tung. Soh-e ke-sing se-deh e œu woh ling wae lai-tung, ya way seu koo. Ng' sheaou sz' suh-kŏ koo? Seu sz' te-nyoh gŏ koo. Haw se chih yew leang te fong: ih-kŏ sz' teen-dong, haou nying dung-tung, kwa-wŏ-gŏ te fong. Ih-

The punishment inflicted by God is of three kinds.

1. The first is in this life. Some men, in consequence of crime, have their bodies suffer the attacks of disease. Those, for instance, who drink to intoxication injure the health of their bodies. Those who use opium cause their bodies to waste away and become thin.

2. The second kind is the death of the body. All men have sin, and all men die. If we suppose a man who never committed any crime, and was entirely sinless, he would never die. Alas! there is no such man, so that all men must die. Disease, pain, death, burial, corruption, are the lot of all.

3. The third is the most severe and terrible, and is to be greatly dreaded. Sickness and death, although bitter in the extreme, do not extend beyond the body. Within the body there remains the soul—most precious — never-dying. The body dies, but the soul can never die, and is not subject to corruption: it is immortal. Therefore after the death of the body the soul remains and is capable of suffering. What suffering? It is the torment of hell. After death there are but two places. One is hell, the abode of the wicked. This

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kŏ sz' te-nyŏh, wah nying seu ying-vuh gŏ te-fong. Keh-kŏ te-nyŏh gŏ te-fong ting kō paw, yew-ho wah nying too zhoo lung lai. Yew-ho oh kü too lai tung, yew ho seaou, yew lay tang, yew Boo-să oh wong, aze-ang fă fung, sze-teh hō yu-kaw djeă, yu-kaw le-hai.

Pung lai, te' nyŏh gŏ koo sz tseang-tung lai-tung, m'yew-kŏ keih-să, m' djeung-dzing gŏ, sz' ting kō paw. Dondœu nying waw, "Tseih yuĕh le te-nyŏh kae-tung, kü kuh-sing lung-tsung tsœu chuh. Kulla yaou pae chŏh-tung, lung tung-se pŏh ghe chŏh, kuh too sz' hò-zong daou-le, ih-nga m'neh bing-keu. Vung che kwooen ghe; vung seang-sing ghe. Wy-yew nying waw nying kaw se-teh hœu-dœu way tso kœu, way tso maw, ngœu, kuh sing, hoh-tsea way tso nying. Keh shih waw ya fuh sz' gŏ; ya sz ho zong daou-le, ih nga m'na bing-keu, haou-vung seang-sing ghe.

Haw-se gŏ sz'-kane alla she kan zong nying fuh sheaou-teh gŏ. Chih yew zong dœu tsing Boo-să. Ghe eking juen lŏ-lai ih pung sing king shoo, kaou 'heang ngoh daou, kuh shoo waw, haw se yew kuh leang te-fong. E-deh nying kaw wa laitung soh tso gŏ sz'-kane, hœudœu yaou paou ying ghe. Haou nying, seang-sing Yay-soo gŏ nying way zong teen dong. place of torment we should exceedingly fear. All wicked men shall dwell in it, and it is the abode of all devils. It is a place burning with fire, and the wrath of God like a mighty wind, makes the fire more intense, and causes it to burn with increased fierceness.

The torment of hell is endless and unceasing, so that we should greatly fear it. The people of this place say that in the seventh month all the spirits in hell are allowed to come forth, and that we should at that time spread tables and prepare food for them to eat. All this is the doctrine of the Buddhist priests and is wholly destitute of proof; it deserves no attention, and is unworthy of your belief. There are also some who say that after death men become dogs, horses, cows, or again become men. This also is not true—it is the doctrine of the Buddhists and destitute of proof. Do not believe it.

What is after death we cannot know. God above alone can know. He has given us the Holy Book to teach us. This book says that after death there are two places. According to men's works in this life they will be recompensed. The good—those who believe in Jesus, will go to heaven. The wicked—those who do not believe in Jesus, will inevitably be

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Wa nying, fuh seang-sing Yay-soo gŏ nying peih ding lŏh te-nyŏh. Soh e Yay-soo fung foo ghe mung sang, ghe waw "ng'nuh kuh pan nying, yaou tsœu lai tsœu che taou yew ho te-fong che, che kong alla daou-le. Nying kaw ting mung, kŭng seang sing, ghe way 'heang yung yuen fuh-che. Fuh kŭng seang-sing, kul sz' 'heih fuh lai gŏ, tsung yaou lŏh te-nyŏh seu koo." (Vid. Matt. 28 : 19.)

Alla pàng yew kaw, tsung ting ngoh shih waw. Alla fuh yaou peen ng'nuh, ya fuh yaou ng'nuh dung-deen, ya fuh yaou ng'nuh dō tung-se sung pŏ ngoh. Alla e-sze chih e 'keh-kŏ la; yaou keuen ng'nuh kwa kwa taou tsœu; haou meen tsing Boo-să ŏh-wong, te-nyŏh gŏ koo, ngoh too yew zay, kulla tsung yaou seu ying vuh. Tsa way năng kœu meen kō keh le-hai ying-vŭh? Yew suh-kŏ daou-loo yaou tsœu? Ngoh kaou 'heang ng'daou. Chih yew ih-daou loo. Chih yew ih-kŏ ming-sz' ngoh ko-e kaou-djŏh, haou kew ngoh wŏh-ling.

Tsing zhing-daou tsa se-gŏ ng'tsz tae nying kaw seu koo-haou kew ngŏh zay nying.

punished in hell. Therefore Jesus commanded his disciples, saying, Go into all the world and teach men my doctrine; those who hear and believe shall obtain everlasting happiness: those who will not believe must fall into hell and be tormented, [or literally—"*receive bitterness.*"]

My friends, listen to my words. I do not wish to deceive you. I do not desire your money, nor that you should give me anything. My only object is to exhort you quickly to flee, that you may escape the wrath of the true God and the bitterness of hell. We all are sinners and all deserve punishment. How shall we escape this terrible punishment? What way is there by which we may flee? I will tell you. There is but one way. There is only one name on which we may trust for the salvation of the soul. The true God has sent his Son to suffer in the place of men, in order that he might save us sinners.

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NINGPO, May 23, 1847.

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