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# THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD,

A WEEKLY RELIGIOUS AND FAMILY NEWSPAPER, DEVOTED TO THE  
ADVOCACY OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

EDITED BY

ISAAC ERRETT, Cincinnati, J. S. LAMAR, Augusta, Ga.

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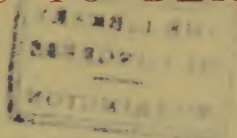
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# TALKS TO BEREANS.

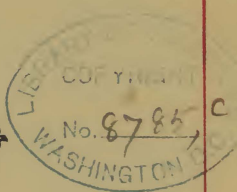


BY

ISAAC ERRETT,

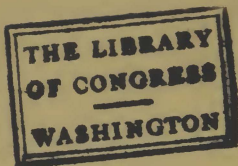
EDITOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD," AUTHOR OF  
"WALKS ABOUT JERUSALEM," ETC.

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea : who, coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed ; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."—ACTS XVII : 10-12.



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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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THE "Talks" here given to the public originally appeared in the editorial columns of "THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD." They are published in this form in obedience to numerous calls from those who read them as they appeared, from week to week, in that journal. They are designed, as will be seen from the title-page, as a help and encouragement to that class of inquirers with whom the Scriptures are divine authority. They are not meant for skeptics, or for any who occupy rationalistic ground. They assume the truth of the Scriptures and the divine authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are multitudes who accept these premises who are, nevertheless, in great doubt and confusion of mind as to what the Scriptures teach concerning the way of salvation. These doubts and confusions grow largely out of the theological controversies of the past, and the influence of these on the religious education of the adherents of different sects. As very many of those for whom we write are plain people, of limited education, and without the means or the leisure to pursue a liberal course of reading in theological controversies, we have sought, in plain language, to unfold the teachings of the Bible, avoiding, as much as possible, attempts at criticism and allusions to denominational peculiarities. Our object has been to lead sinners to believe in, love, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, assured that if they become Christians indeed, it will make little difference if they should remain forever ignorant of theological controversy. We send it forth with a prayer that it may be blessed in guiding honest souls out of doubt and anguish into faith and peace.

CINCINNATI, *July 25, 1872.*



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# TALKS TO BEREANS.

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## SERMON I.

### SIN.

“Dead in trespasses and in sins.”—EPH. ii. 1.

TO aid honest inquirers anxiously seeking the way of life, as well as to fortify young disciples, that they may know the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed, we propose to write a series of short sermons on the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. They are not designed to convince skeptics, nor yet to convict the impenitent; but rather to give help to such as believe the Bible and feel the weight of sin, and desire to understand clearly the gospel of salvation.

The gospel is addressed to sinners. It assumes

that all men are sinners; that they need to be saved from sin; and it presents Jesus as an all-sufficient Saviour.

We ought to have well-defined ideas of sin and its consequences, if we would understand and appreciate the salvation which the gospel offers.

When we look at the universe of matter, as far as it is open to our inspection, we are struck with one contrast which it presents to the universe of mind or spirit: in the former, order and harmony is the rule, disorder and discord the exception; in the latter, disorder, discord, and wretchedness are largely in the ascendant. Even much that seems, at first sight, to be disorder in the material system, proves, on fuller investigation, to be subservient to harmonious ends; but in regard to the moral nature, we are painfully conscious in our own experience, and impressed by all our observations, that there is an almost utter want of peace and harmony, and a fearful prevalence of unrest and wretchedness.

The reason of this perfect order in the universe of matter is, *the perfect supremacy of law*. The Will of God is the fountain of order and happiness. Infinitely wise and infinitely good, He wills only that

which is for the best ; and whenever that will is obeyed, there must be the best results. That will impresses itself *by naked omnipotence* on material things ; every particle of matter obeys it : hence, all his works declare his glory, and show forth his praise.

In the moral universe, the same condition of blessedness prevails—perfect obedience to the will of God. If all moral creatures obeyed his will, the perfection of moral beauty and excellence would be seen. But that will asserts itself in a different way in dealing with moral natures. It is not here the naked omnipotence by which matter is controlled. Man has reason, conscience, will. He must be controlled by *authority*, not by omnipotent power merely. He must be ruled by *motive*. The very fact that he has been created with a will of his own, puts it in his power to oppose the will of God. He has in fact done so ; has made disorder, and robbed himself of the perfect happiness which might have been his. This resistance to the will of God—this departure from divine authority—this setting-up of some other will in the place of God's will—is what is called *sin*. “Sin,” says John, “is the transgres-

sion of the law," or lawlessness. The law of God is simply the expression of the will of God. And as the will of God is the fountain of order and of happiness, it follows that sin is the fountain of disorder and of wretchedness.

To be perfectly obedient to God is to be in harmony with God himself, and therefore to enjoy his love and fellowship, and to be perfectly blessed. To depart from that will, in any particular, is to depart alike from honor, peace, and blessedness. The Greek term which is most frequently translated *sin*, in the New Testament, means, *to miss the mark*. It is a departure from the true aim of life and from the straight line of duty.

But let us be careful to guard against error here. Let us not get the notion that the will of God relates merely to external actions, or that sin is merely the transgression of law in external acts. The will of God relates to our whole nature. It seeks to hold reason, conscience, and all the moral affections under its beneficent control; and we may sin, therefore, in thought, in affection, in purpose: indeed, since we are moral beings, the sin in external act is but the offspring of sin in the

thoughts and affections. "*From within, out of the heart*, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."\* The basis of all piety and morality is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.† Sin, therefore, has its seat in the heart, and we can only be delivered from it as the heart is restored to perfect loyalty to God. A man is "tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."‡

In the light of these considerations, how fearfully have we all wandered from God, and what great need have we of salvation!

The legitimate results of sin may be viewed:

I. *With reference to the sinner himself.* It alienates him from the life of God. Inevitably, by an eternal law of the moral universe, it unfits

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\* Mark vii. 21-23.

† Matt. xxii. 37-39.

‡ Jas. i. 14, 15.

him for God's presence, and impels him to flee from it.

It dethrones his spiritual nature, and gives supremacy to his passions, thus introducing misrule, degradation, and death—death in trespasses and sins.

It evermore increases its power, until all that is noble and excellent is crushed under the tyranny of lust and passion ; the spirit is subjugated by the flesh, reason is perverted, conscience is blunted, the affections are all corrupted ; and if this is unchecked, it reaches a point of degradation from which there is no return—the moral nature being so violated and outraged as to be incapable of asserting itself. This is an awful, hopeless depth of death. “ Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”\*

II. *With reference to God.* It places the sinner in antagonism with God—in an attitude of rebellion which affects the divine authority and God's government of his intelligent creation. It is, in this point of view, a most serious and awful thing, and has consequences as far-reaching

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\* 2 Tim. iii. 13.

as the moral government of Jehovah. It is impossible, therefore, that God can lightly regard it.

III. *With reference to destiny.* As destiny necessarily grows out of character, and we can only possess such a future as we have been prepared for,—the affections, desires, principles and purposes cherished here necessarily being a part of us, and going with us wherever we go,—it follows that, unless delivered from sin, our destiny can be none other than the full fruits of the disorder and wretchedness that sin has caused: an eternal alienation from God, an eternal degradation of our nobler nature, an eternal harvest of the seeds of iniquity which we have sown. God deliver us!

But we fail to get a complete view of what sin has done to injure and ruin us, if we confine our view to its immediate effects on ourselves. We must take into account that *we inherit* sad and terrible consequences of sin. By that fearful, but necessary law, which involves the child with the parent, and the individual with the race, we *inherit*, if not guilt, certainly terrible misfortunes. Our first parents were placed on trial—it was the trial of human nature. They fell—it was the

fall of human nature. They were exiled from God—it was the exile of human nature. *We are all consequently born in exile from God*, and with disordered natures. We grow up in ignorance of God. If left to drift, we must drift inevitably away from God. Unless help comes from without, we are undone. Unless God is gracious, we are lost forever.

Here, then, is the sad state of things that sin has superinduced :

1. We are by nature the children of wrath.\*
2. We are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us.†
3. We are enemies in our minds by wicked works.‡

Evidently we can not save ourselves out of these fearful predicaments. We must find a Saviour, or perish. Some one must be found who can.

(1.) Banish our ignorance, and restore to us the knowledge of God.

(2.) Destroy the dominion of sin, and deliver us from wicked works.

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\* Eph. ii. 3.

† Eph. iv. 18.

‡ Col. i. 21.

(3.) Remove the guilt of sin, and reconcile us to God.

In a word, we must be regenerated—born again—and brought into new life and new relationships. A second Adam must be found, in whom we may inherit righteousness and life, and be restored to the fellowship of God and a life of cheerful obedience.

## SERMON II.

### SALVATION.

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the kindness and philanthropy of our Saviour God was manifested—not by works wrought in righteousness which we did, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the font of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that having been justified by his grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”—TITUS iii. 3-7. (*Alford's revision.*)

WE saw in the first sermon the ruin wrought by sin, and the impossibility of man's recovery, except by help from without and above himself. This estimate of the fallen and hopeless condition of our race is justified by the history of mankind, which is, indeed, but a history of sin, and of unavailing experiments on the part of men at self-recovery. Not that all virtue and goodness were obliterated. Amid the ruins of the temple of humanity, there have ever lingered some beams of the Light which at first filled it with glory. Some nations have been distinguished for partic-

ular virtues, and some individuals have been eminent in almost all virtues, according to human standards of excellence. But it is to be considered:

1. That men have never been left entirely to themselves. All nations have inherited more or less of redeeming and regenerating influences through divine movements in human society.

2. The best men of whom heathen nations are wont to boast, derived their eminence from the contrast of their lives with the degraded and demoralized masses around them, rather than from their conformity to such a standard as would fit them for restoration to the fellowship of God.

3. The masses under the reign of sin, even where there was the greatest intellectual exaltation, have ever been morally degraded, "disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, filled with malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Read Rom. i. 18-32, for a statement of the moral condition of the Gentile world—a statement fully corroborated by heathen authors; and Romans iii. 9-19, for an inspired sketch of the moral condition of the Jews; and say what hope there was for humanity without a Saviour.

The utter hopelessness of this condition may be gathered from two considerations :

(1.) The very impulse to goodness—the desire for it, and the strength to achieve it—was constantly more and more impaired by sin, so that power to do good must come from without.

(2.) Man, as a creature under law to God, can only be justified by complete obedience to that law. Do his best, and there is never any extra virtue that can be urged as an equivalent for sins committed or duties neglected. Even sixty-nine years and three hundred and sixty-four days of perfect obedience, could only answer for themselves—they could not stand, in law, to offset the sins of a single day. Evidently, then, we can not be saved by works of righteousness. Justification by law is out of the question. Our only hope is in the mercy of the God against whom we have sinned. This is the glad revelation of the gospel: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”

God compassionates his sinful and perishing creatures ; his heart of infinite love yearns toward them, and, out of his own treasures of wisdom and of power, he brings forth the means of salvation.

It is well to pause and consider this most precious and vital truth—salvation by grace. It is difficult for men under deep conviction of sin to realize it. They condemn themselves severely, and loathe their own sinfulness, and are apt to transfer to God the hue of their own feelings, so as to see in him only an offended sovereign frowning in wrath on the guilty. That God is just and hates sin, is true ; but he does not hate the sinner, nor is it difficult to prevail with him to forgive those who seek forgiveness. He loves the sinner, and delights to forgive. There is a beautiful and precious word in our text—philanthropy ; the love of man. Not the love of a particular class of men,—good men, smart men, brave men, elect men,—but the love of man as man, just because he is man, and therefore the love of all men. Divine Love, seeking a world of sinners to save them, is the beautiful spectacle presented to us in the gospel of salvation. Hence that grand oracle: “God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”\* “God, who is *rich* in

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\* John iii. 16.

mercy (not only merciful, but *rich* in mercy—an immense wealth of mercy not readily exhausted), for his great love wherewith he loved us (not only love, but *great* love—love not hard to be entreated, love not difficult of access, love that does not wait for us to come and seek it, but comes to seek us, and weep over us, and plead with us, and enlighten us, and give the most precious life for us), even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”\* “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”†

Salvation is, then, of grace, not of works. If saved at all, we are saved because God is gracious, and has in mercy provided salvation for us. An immense stride out of darkness into light is taken when we learn that the mercy of God is the fountain of salvation, and that he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

But it does not follow, because we are saved by grace, and not by works of righteousness, that we

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\* Eph. ii. 4-6.

† I John iv. 10.

have nothing to do in order to be saved. It is the salvation, not of a mass of unreasoning matter, but of a living, thinking, and moral creature. Salvation is not a mere sovereign act of forgiveness, or the impress of regenerating power upon a passive nature, but the recovery of the understanding, conscience, affections, and will, out of all their perversions and corruptions, and the sad consequences of these perversions, and the placing of that whole nature again in harmonious relations with God. It is to make an ignorant being intelligent, a polluted one pure, a sinful one righteous, a rebellious one obedient, and a despairing one hopeful and joyous. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching 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."\* So also our text marks the contrast

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\* Titus ii. 11-14.

between the disobedience, hatefulness, and lustfulness of the unsaved state, and the purity and blessedness of the state of regeneration or renewal.

Now it is evident that such a change involves the consent of the will, the exercise of the affections, and the obedience of the life; and that while God provides salvation, he provides it in accordance with the wants and capacities of our spiritual nature, and seeks to win us to it. It must, on our part, be *received* and *appropriated*.

The whole subject of salvation, then, lies within the scope of two inquiries:

- I. What has God done to save us?
  - II. What is man required to do to be saved?
- We will attend to these in their order.

## SERMON III.

### THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF SALVATION.

“God who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.”—  
HEB. i. 1, 2.

THE question now before us is, *What has God done to save us?* We must give several sermons to this question. For the present, we design to note *the progressive development of God's gracious designs in behalf of our race.*

Salvation was not revealed all at once. The preparations for its full and final revelation, extended over a period of four thousand years. Many are tempted to ask why. Why did not the Saviour come at once, and announce to the first sinners the same gospel that we find in the New Testament? If we could not tell why, we are still compelled to accept the fact that it was not so done. The scientist, in exploring the fields of nature, finds that, in building a globe like that on which we

live, God has patiently progressed with his work through long geological periods. The man of science may not be able to tell why. He may conceive the possibility of divine power accomplishing such a work instantaneously; but he is compelled to admit the fact of progressive development, whether he understands its philosophy or not. The most he can say is, it is in accordance with the principle of divine movements—the law of divine action—that is every-where traceable in God's works. So here. The fact is what concerns us, even if we remain ignorant of its philosophy. The fact is, that four thousand years were occupied in preparing the way for the coming of the Saviour, and the complete development of his salvation. But we are not without some knowledge of reasons for this procedure. We can discover reasons for it here that do not so readily apply to the analogous progression in material creations. We can conceive the possibility of Omnipotence speaking worlds into being in an instant; but we can not, with equal facility, think of Omnipotence swaying rational natures, and compelling beings, who have a will of their own, to love and hate, obey and disobey, be good or evil,

at a word of command. Such a notion has, indeed, prevailed in many minds. Edwards, for instance, in his History of Redemption, speaking of the Flood, says: "God could have converted all the world instead of drowning it:" thus making their conversion a mere question of power, and resolving the cause of their destruction into a failure on the part of God to will their conversion! This is monstrous. It is the logical result, however, of false premises in Edwards's theological system. We have seen that salvation involves the restoration of the rebellious soul to loyalty—to delight in and fellowship with God. This, in its turn, involves *choice* on the part of the sinner—a voluntary turning from falsehood to truth, from sin to holiness. No such voluntary turning can take place until the sinner learns enough of the odious curse of sin to hate it, and is convinced of the beauty of holiness, so as to desire it; nor can it be until he has become so satisfied of his own impotence as to be willing to accept the boon of salvation at the hands of another. He must learn in the school of experience. Time must be given for sin to develop itself in the history of the race, and for men to try their own remedial schemes.

Only when, like the prodigal, they have wasted their substance, exhausted their resources, and feel the pressure of utter despair, will they come to themselves, and say, "I will arise and go to my Father." It required ages for the needful experiments of sinful man in government, philosophy, and religion, before the need of salvation could be suitably realized. Hence Paul says, that as men "did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind ;"\* and that "in times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways,"† yet not leaving himself without witness. We must regard these four thousand years, then, as given up to the various nations for experiment, until they should weary of their vain inventions. Meanwhile, the development of salvation could only keep pace with the development of human nature, and the attainments of human experience. God's revelations must adapt themselves to the circumstances and capacities of the race he seeks to save.

During this period of experiment, God chooses such men and measures as will meet the emergen-

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\* Rom. i. 28.      † Acts xiv. 16.

cies as they arise—ever having in view the final object, to reveal a complete system of salvation. During the first periods he chose individuals and families through whom to make known his purposes, and assert his redeeming power. Afterward he chose a nation as his own—not for their own sake, but for the world's sake—that through these elect persons and this elect nation he might move on the nations of men, and reveal, “at sundry times and in divers manners,” such portions of his will and such ideas of himself and his purposes as would tend to prepare the way for their return to him.

It must never be forgotten, in reading the Old Testament, that it presents a gradual unfolding of the purposes and plans of God for the salvation of the world. Love and Mercy preside over all this period, shaping, molding, restraining men, thwarting rebellious purposes, raising up and casting down nations,\* and making such revelations of truth and righteousness, judgment and grace, as men could receive. It is only in this large view, and interpreting its words in the light of

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\* See Ex. ix. 16; Jer. xviii. 1-10.

this grand purpose, that the facts of the Old Testament can have a worthy meaning. Abraham was chosen by grace, and not on account of merit—for he too was an idolater. But he was thus chosen from others, not to eternal life, but to be a fit instrument and agent to accomplish God's gracious purposes in behalf of others. Isaac was elected over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau, not to eternal life, but as God's agents to do a work toward the world's redemption. The Jewish nation was an elect nation—elected, not to eternal life, but to a peculiar position among the nations, and as the inheritor of peculiar privileges, *for the benefit of the world at large*. With this thought before the reader, much that has been dark and perplexing in such scriptures as Rom. ix will be relieved of difficulty. We must understand the purposes, predestinations, and elections so often spoken of in the New Testament as referring to this grand purpose to save men through Jesus Christ, and the election and reprobation of individuals and of nations as they would serve or fail to serve this purpose.

We often read of the purpose of God,—his previous purpose or predestination. “He saved us

. . . according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, *before the times of the ages.*"\* "In hope of eternal life, which God, who can not lie, *promised before the times of the ages*, but he has, in his own times, manifested his word by preaching."† "All things work together for good to those who . . . *are called, according to his purpose.* For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."‡ Although this purpose was but dimly revealed through the preparatory ages, and was "a mystery kept secret from ages," we learn from Paul that God was working all this time according to a definite purpose and plan. The gospel was therefore "preached beforehand" to Abraham, "the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen nations by faith."§ Accordingly, Jesus came "in the full-

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\* 2 Tim. i. 9.

† Tit. i. 2, 3.

‡ Rom. viii. 28-30. See also Eph. iii. 1-11.

§ Gal. iii. 8.

ness of time ;”\* in “the last days” of the preparatory ages ; and what had been but partially spoken “at sundry times and in divers manners,” during those ages, is fully spoken now by God’s Son.

Learn, hence, that the Old Testament does not contain a complete revelation of salvation. It contains hints, promises, types, prophecies of it, in numerous phases, and should be studied for an intelligent view of the method of God’s dealings with men ; but the complete salvation,—“the ripe corn in the ear,” of which only the blade and the ear are seen in the Jewish scriptures, is found only in the New Testament.

All that we have been contemplating exhibits the wisdom and mercy of God in a patient preparation of the world for the complete development of the “great salvation.” From the announcement to Adam, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,† until John the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,”‡ all is a progressive development of the eternal purpose of Jehovah to offer salvation to “all the world, to every creature.”

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\* Gal. iv. 4.

† Gen. iii. 15.

‡ John i. 29.

## SERMON IV.

### THE FULLNESS OF TIME.

“But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son.”—  
GAL. iv. 4.

WE have already spoken of some of the reasons why salvation could not be perfectly revealed at once,—why ages of preparation were necessary, and, therefore, why the great purpose of God to offer salvation to all men was a secret, a “mystery” hidden from ages and from generations. We are now to show that the period of the advent of Jesus was “the fullness of time.”

#### I. Sin had been allowed full development.

Its bitter and inevitable curses had followed men in all countries. The terrible plague-spot made its appearance every-where. No class was exempt, no individual was free from the malady. Every-where and always it was a poison in the cup of life, and its effects were deadly. Its bitter fruits in every

kind of disorder, pollution, crime, outrage, and suffering, entered into all experience, and reddened every page of human history with blood, or blackened it with iniquity. Indeed, an experience much short of four thousand years might have sufficed on this head ; but,

II. The different races of men had experimented to weariness in vain efforts to save themselves.

This required time ; and at no time short of this period had these experiments landed the race in so thorough a despair.

The utter failure of antediluvian attempts to control human nature and govern society is told in the flood that swept an incorrigible world into destruction. After the deluge, mighty civilizations were developed on the plains of Assyria, and the march of civilization thence to Egypt, to Greece, and to Rome, records successive and stupendous efforts of man, in his departure from God, to construct religions, philosophies, and governments that should effect the regeneration of the race. They started not without some capital. They took, in the treasures of original tradition, a considerable portion of goods from the Father's house, when they went forth on their prodigal career.

They were not destitute of genius or of talents. As glorious minds as God has ever given to the race, he gave ever and anon to those ancient nations and peoples, that they might not lack any capacity that their own nature was capable of supplying. It ended in utter failure. There was grand military skill ; there was sometimes great statesmanship ; there were glorious architectural monuments of taste, and genius, and labor ; there were immortal triumphs of art wrought by pencil and chisel ; oratory and poetry that can never die have come down to us from those times, and the world echoes yet with speech, and music, and song, from hearts and lips inspired with genius that men call godlike. Science made discoveries, and Art wrought inventions, and Philosophy taught beautiful and wonderful things ; but sin still held sway, and no human genius or skill could break its power or unlock the awful mysteries of death. Every generation sought to improve by the struggles and failures of its predecessors, until human wisdom was taxed to its utmost, and the world was bankrupt alike in faith and hope. The language of the elder Pliny will best express to us the utter helplessness and hopeless-

ness in which these prodigious and long-continued efforts landed the race :

“ All religion is the offspring of necessity, weakness, and fear. What God is—if, indeed, he be any thing distinct from the world—it is beyond the compass of man’s understanding to know. But it is a foolish delusion, which has sprung from human weakness and human pride, to imagine that such an infinite Spirit would concern himself with the petty affairs of men. It is difficult to say whether it might not be better to be wholly without religion, than to have one of this kind, which is a reproach to its object. The vanity of man, and his insatiable longing after existence, have led him to dream of a life after death. A being full of contradictions, he is the most wretched of creatures, since the other creatures have not wants transcending the bounds of their nature. Man is full of desires and wants that reach to infinity, and can never be satisfied. His nature is a lie, uniting the greatest poverty with the greatest pride. Among these so great evils, the best thing which God has bestowed on man, is the power to take his own life.”\*

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\* Quoted by Neander in the Introduction to his Church History.

There it is. The prodigal has wasted his substance, and is down among the swine feeding on husks. Nay, worse than the prodigal in the parable, he has lost all faith in a Father, all knowledge of a Father's house. It is time for the Saviour to come and seek the lost.

III. The Jews had fulfilled their mission, both as a bulwark against idolatry in their national capacity, and as missionaries to carry the revelations of God among the nations of mankind. Alike in their high national prosperity, when, in league with Tyre, they reached out over the seas in commercial enterprise, and in their captivities and dispersions, when Babylon, Nineveh, Ecbatana, Alexandria, and other great seats of empire and of learning, became centers of radiation for the truth they had in keeping, they fulfilled their wonderful mission in preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. They came in contact with the political, commercial, and literary potencies of the different ages, under all the great dynasties of ancient times. As a specimen of the work providentially accomplished by them, let us mention the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, at Alexandria, more than two centuries before the

coming of the Christ. "It was," says Thomas De Quincey, "an advantage of a rank rising to providential, that such a cosmopolitan version of the Hebrew sacred writings should have been made at a moment when a rare concurrence of circumstances happened to make it possible; such, as for example, a king both learned in his tastes and liberal in his principles of religious toleration; a language—the Greek—which had already become what for many centuries it continued to be, a common language of communication for the learned of the whole civilized world, viz.: Greece, the shores of the Euxine, the whole of Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Carthage, and all the dependencies of Carthage; finally, and above all, Rome, then beginning to loom upon the western horizon, together with all the dependencies of Rome, and, briefly, every State and city that adorned the imperial islands of the Mediterranean, or that glittered like gems in that vast belt of land, roundly speaking, one thousand miles in average breadth, and in circuit running up to five thousand miles. . . . Such was the boundless domain which this extraordinary act of Ptolemy suddenly threw open to the literature and spiritual revelation of a little

obscure race, nestling in a little angle of Asia, scarcely visible as a fraction of Syria, buried in the broad shadows thrown out on one side by the great and ancient settlements on the Nile, and on the other by the vast empire that for thousands of years occupied the Tigris and the Euphrates. In the twinkling of an eye, at a sudden summons, as it were, from the sounding of a trumpet, or the Oriental call by a clapping of hands, gates are thrown open which have an effect corresponding in grandeur to the effect that would arise from the opening of a ship canal across the Isthmus of Darien, viz.: the introduction to each other, face to face, of two separate infinities. Such a canal would suddenly lay open to each other the two great oceans of our planet; while the act of translating *into* Greek and *from* Hebrew—that is, transferring out of a mysterious cipher as little accessible as Sanscrit, and which never would be more accessible through any worldly attractions of alliance with power and civic grandeur of commerce—*out of* this darkness *into* the golden light of a language the most beautiful, the most honored among men, and the most widely diffused through a thousand years to come, had the immeasurable

effect of throwing into the great crucible of human speculation, even then beginning to ferment, to boil, to overflow, that mightiest of all elements for exalting the chemistry of philosophy, grand, and for the first time adequate, conceptions of the Deity. . . . And considering the activity of this great commercial city and port, which was meant to act, and did act, as a center of communication between the East and the West, it is probable that a far greater effect was produced by the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, in the way of preparing the mind of nations for the apprehension of Christianity, than has ever been distinctly recognized."\*

It is no longer a wonder that Josephus, Suetonius, and Tacitus should agree to say that, according to the decrees of fate in the sacred books, mankind were taught to look to the time of the appearing of Jesus, for the coming of a great Deliverer. The bitter experiences of the race, and the widely spread prophecies of the Jewish scriptures combined to make him "the Desire of nations."†

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\* Theol. Essays, vol. 1, pp. 146, 147.

† While it was necessary that the influence of Judaism should

IV. The Greek was the language of the civilized world when Jesus came. The Roman empire, stretching from the Euphrates to the German Ocean, and from the Danube and the Rhine to the cataracts of the Nile, the African deserts and Mount Atlas, tolerated all religions at all compatible with civil order, unified as far as possible all interests, threw up great military highways into all provinces, and in preparing to preserve and maintain its own imperial sway, prepared the way for the heralds of the cross, and brought the main portions of the human family within reach of the

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spread unto the heathen world, in order to prepare the way and open a point of communication for Christianity, so was it needful also that the stern and repulsive rigidity of Judaism should be softened and expanded by the elements of Hellenic culture, in order to adapt it to embrace the new truths which the gospel was to exhibit. The three great historical nations had, each in its own peculiar way, to co-operate in preparing the soil in which Christianity was to be planted—the Jews on the side of the religious element, the Greeks on the side of science and art, the Romans as masters of the world, on the side of the political element. When the fullness of the time was come, and Christ appeared—when the goal of history had thus been reached—then it was that through him, and by the power of the spirit that proceeded from him, by the might of Christianity, all the threads of human development which had hitherto been kept apart, were to be brought together and interwoven in one work.—*Neander's Ch. Hist.*, Int. page 6, Bohn's Ed.

regenerating influences of the truth and grace of God.

Thus it is apparent that Jesus came in the "fullness of time." All the events of time were divinely ordered with reference to this great consummation. The revelations made to the Jews, and through them to the world, were arranged in their development and dissemination, with reference to the same event. "Christ was placed midmost in the world's history; and in that central position, he towers, like some vast mountain, to heaven—the farther slope stretching backward toward the creation, the hither slope toward the approaching consummation of all things. The ages before look to him with prophetic gaze, the ages since behold him by historic faith; by both he is seen in common, as 'the brightness of the Father's glory,' and the unspeakable gift of God to the race."

## SERMON V.

### THE GREAT GIFT.

“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.

THE question now under consideration is, *What has God done to save us?* The answer, in its most important feature, is given in the text. The great demonstration of divine grace and love is found in the gift of a Saviour. The greater includes all lesser gifts. “He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?”\* The gospel presents no *philosophy* of salvation,—no theory, or system of doctrines, to be accepted on the basis of reason; but a Saviour, to be confided in, loved, and obeyed. Undoubtedly there is a philosophy and a true doc-

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\* Rom. viii. 32.

trinal theory belonging to the plan of salvation ; but (1) as this salvation has its springs in the depths of the Infinite mind, and its premises were laid in the Divine view—and not in any human view,—of the nature of God, of man, of sin, and of the ends of the Divine government, it is not likely that even the most gigantic of created intellects can ever fathom its mysteries or grasp its logic ; the angels desire to look into these things ;\* the ever-steadfast gaze of adoring cherubs that looked down on the mercy-seat † was but a type of the eternal fathoming of the eternally fathomless depths of Infinite wisdom and mercy by the grandest of created minds ; and (2) if even the most gifted minds could dive into these depths and bring up for themselves pearls of great price, the great masses of men could not succeed in doing so. The masses can not seize abstractions. Truth must come to them in concrete form,—embodied, visible, tangible. God, therefore, gave the world a *person*—not a doctrine—and in him, in his nature, and in his character, all that is needful for salvation. The gospel is not, therefore, abstract

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\* 1 Pet. i. 12.

† Ex. xxv. 20.

truth to be accepted as the result of a process of abstract reasoning; but a biography, a history,—facts, to be supported by evidence, and to be *believed* on the evidence presented.

From what has been suggested in previous sermons, it is evident that two great wants of human nature must be met, in order to the salvation of sinners.

1. God must be revealed in his relations to humanity. This called for a special and supernatural revelation. Nature does not teach it. Nature reveals “the eternal power and divinity” of Jehovah; but these are a revelation not more to the wants of man than to the wants of the grasshopper. It shows what God is to his whole creation, but not what he is to sinners. Men, as sinful and apostate creatures, must have a special revelation or perish in despair. Here is a legitimate demand for the supernatural,—an all-sufficient plea for miracles, or man is not worth saving. What God thinks of sinners, and how he is disposed to deal with them, are questions which Nature answers not.

Nor can a revelation of mere words, like the Law, answer this end. Words can not bridge the awful chasm between apostate man and his Maker.

They may furnish some idea of God's meaning; but they are of human origin,—they have a standard value as the currency of human thought and feeling; and, however, richly freighted with divine grace and mercy, as interpreted to God's own heart, they can only be interpreted to man's heart according to his own standard, and will be, more or less, dwarfed into the measure of his own miserably stunted conception.

*God must come upon the plane of human life and identify himself with humanity* before man can understand him and trust in him. God manifest in flesh—Emmanuel—God with us, is the great need of the world.

2. There must be a *demonstration* of Divine power to lift human nature out of its helplessness and carry it up to triumph over sin and death. It is of little use to prove that God is *able* to save man, or that it is *reasonable* that the Creator should tenderly compassionate his creature, or that it is in harmony with the soundest teaching of mental and moral science that man has recuperative and restorative energies in his nature which will answer to the first quickening touch of truth and love. All this is pale moonshine play-

ing among icebergs, with glittering charms, but with no melting power. What is wanted is, to see human nature lifted up from its depths of weakness and wretchedness, and carried successfully through the bitterest conflicts of sin, and sorrow, and death, to complete and immortal victory.

All this is fulfilled in the person of Jesus, the son of Mary, and the Son of God. He was God manifest in human flesh, bringing God on to the plane of human want and woe, revealing Divine wisdom, holiness, tenderness, and mercy, through a human organization, and identifying the Creator with the creature in the most loving and pitying Fatherhood. He was also the Son of Man, and, as a man, his life was one grand series, not of reasonings, but of *demonstrations* of the willingness and power of God to save. From the extremest weakness and helplessness of infancy on through all its phases of suffering, temptation, and wretchedness, this blessed champion went with our nature—shrinking from no trial, evading no foe, but seeking the most intimate association with all that is sorrowful, desolate, and despairing in the lot of man,—and out of every dungeon of captivity he brought that nature forth, its chains broken, its

tears wiped away, its broken heart bound up, its sins forgiven, its enemies made captive, and even death itself swallowed up in victory. It is no longer in doubt whether God loves man, whether sin can be conquered, whether there is another life after death; all this is *demonstration* in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth; it comes to us in the mighty *facts* of the gospel, frees the human heart from doubt and despair, and fills it with the regenerating influences of faith, and hope, and love.

To be more particular, this grand revelation is made to us—

(1.) In the *teachings* of Jesus: teachings at once so simple, so oracular, so pure, so comprehensive, and so searching, that they reveal man to himself, and God to man, as neither was ever before revealed. "Come, see the man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" has been the language of millions besides the Samaritan woman. And millions have said with Peter: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

(2.) In the *life* of Jesus : a life in which God so infinitely condescends, and man is so infinitely exalted; a life so intensely human, so Divinely perfect; so apparently deformed in the harsh extremes that crowd into it, yet so grandly symmetrical in its reconciliation of all antagonisms; so gentle, so stern; so tempted, so pure; so weak, so mighty; so human, so divine, that man was never more entirely man nor God more perfectly God than in this marvelous revelation. God comes down to us in such condescensions and compassions, that fear is supplanted by love; and man is carried up into such strength and victory, that despair gives way to conquering faith and hope. God comes down to man, and the race is no longer fatherless. Man is brought back to God, and the race is no longer helpless.

(3.) In the *miracles* of Jesus : miracles in which that grandest of all combinations is seen—Omnipotence wedded to Love. The result is a series of wonders so grand and awful that we worship in their presence, and say, "Truly this is the Son of God;" yet so sweet, and tender, and beautiful, that we weep and rejoice as we behold them, and the very children, charmed into enthusiasm, cry,

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

(4.) In the *sufferings* and *death* of Jesus. We may not know all the reasons why "it behooved Christ to suffer," nor be able to grasp the philosophy of the atonement. But two things are certain. (1.) If, to redeem a suffering race like ours, it was necessary that the Son of God should come on to the plane of human experiences, it was impossible that he could redeem us except through sufferings. In some sort our sins and sorrows must become his, or he can not lift them away. The extent to which this is true is indicated in such language as this: "He died for our sins."\* "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."† "He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that ye, being freed from sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."‡ "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid on him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep had gone astray; we had gone

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\*1 Cor. xv. 3.

†1 Pet. iii. 18.

‡1 Pet. ii. 24.

every one after his own way; but the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.”\* (2.) Nothing so touches the heart and quickens the sensibilities as suffering—especially when it is voluntarily borne in behalf of others. This entrance, therefore, into our suffering lot—this voluntary acceptance of the bitter cup of human experience to be drunk to the dregs—involving poverty, loneliness, persecution, conflict with infernal powers, betrayal, revilings, buffetings, scourgings, crucifixion, and a descent into such darkness of despair as to extort the cry, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” until the heart broke under the load of reproach, and shame, and despair, is the most touching appeal that God could make to the human heart to win it to repentance. Love—suffering, toiling, and bleeding in our behalf, and bending over us with tears and agonies of grief to beseech us to be reconciled to God, is the culmination of heavenly eloquence; and when Jesus dies, of the plea, as well of the suffering, it may be said, “It is finished.” This love must win us, or we are lost beyond redemption.

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\* Isa. liii. 5, 6.

(5.) In the *resurrection* and *exaltation* of Jesus. Death is conquered, and man ascends in a chariot to the throne of God! Blessed consummation! All who have read the reasonings of philosophy on another life know through what intricate mazes the sages seek to thread their way, where but few can follow them, and how nebulous are their best conclusions on this subject. But here is a simple fact: Jesus rose from the dead. The lowly mind, the most unlettered among the broken-hearted of earth, can understand and appreciate it, and *faith* rejoices in that which *philosophy* searched for in vain.

The salvation of man is complete, from ignorance, from pollution, from weakness, from guilt, and from death, when the sinner appropriates, by faith, all the treasures of Divine wisdom, love, and power to be found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

What Christ is in himself, in his personal excellence as the Son of God; what he is in his offices as the Christ,—as the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King; and what he has done for us, to redeem us from sin and its bitter fruits; are the three great questions that concern us, so far as saving faith is

concerned. These questions settled, there remains but one more of real moment; namely, what he requires us to do.

Our readers will now see why, in the gospel, every thing centers in Christ; why the one thing insisted on is faith in him.

“ Possessing Christ, I all possess—  
Wisdom, and strength, and righteousness,  
And holiness complete.

This, then, is the one thing which concerns us. The inquiring sinner need not worry himself over the questions of original sin, predestination, election, effectual calling, regeneration, or any other speculative questions. Not that there is no truth in them. There *is* truth in them, and truth worth looking after,—but not when the soul is in peril and longing for salvation. Would a drowning man in mid-ocean spend his moments in speculations about the specific gravity of water and air, the philosophy of the gulf stream, or the laws of gravitation—or refuse to be saved until he had first settled it that it was according to the eternal purpose and predestination of God that he should be saved? Would he trifle with his life in vain reasonings to

reconcile Divine foreknowledge with the freedom of the human will, and argue that if God meant him to be saved, he would be; and if not, no earthly power could save him? No, no. He would look for the hand that could rescue him from drowning; and, if he saw it, would grasp it, and cling to it, until salvation from drowning was complete. He would take more fitting moments for such speculations, if, indeed, he should find any moments not more valuable for better uses. And why should the perishing sinner trifle away his opportunity for salvation in vain attempts to solve these questions? He is guilty; he is dying; he is lost. Jesus comes in the gospel, and says, "I can save you." The only question that really concerns him is this one of the ability of Christ to save. Is he the Son of God? Can he take away our sins? Is he stronger than Death? If so, trust him and obey his voice, and salvation is assured.

We ask our readers to consult John xx. 30, 31; iii. 11-21; Luke xxiv. 44-49; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Matt. xxviii. 18-20; Acts ii. 14-41; iii. 12-26; viii. 26-40; x. 34-48; xiii. 23-39; xvi. 13-34; xvii. 22-34; xxvi. 1-29; xxviii. 23-31; and see that the preach-

ing of the gospel is the preaching of Christ, and that the one great end sought is to bring sinners to trust in Christ, love him, and obey him. All other questions sink into nothingness in the presence of this.

In conclusion, let us remind our readers that the love of God, spoken of in our text, is a love of which *all men* are objects. He "so loved *the world*." Eternal life is offered to all in those precious words, "that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Reader, God loves *you*! Whosoever means *you*! Will you open your heart to this precious love of God? Will you believe in Jesus? To refuse to believe in him is to perish. To believe in him is to seize the treasures of eternal life. Consider these things, and may the Lord give you an understanding heart.

## SERMON VI.

### THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I depart ; for if I depart not, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not on me ; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye behold me no more ; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not hear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth ; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak ; and he shall tell you the things to come. He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall tell it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine ; for this cause said I, that he receiveth of mine, and shall tell it unto you.”—JOHN xvi. 7-15.

IT was needful that the Son of God, after perfecting his personal mission on earth, should withdraw his presence from men, and return to the Father. His life, his death, and his resurrection, were once for all. To consummate the designs of this plan of redemption, it was necessary that not only this world, but all worlds, should be placed under his control. The reign of sin and the reign of grace alike extend in their influence to other

worlds, and the redemption of the human race required the service and the control of the principalities and powers of other spheres, that to them might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God. The government of the universe was therefore transferred to the Son of Man, and humanity in association with divinity now sways the scepter of universal dominion. The God-man reigns.

There is, perhaps, another reason why it was expedient that Jesus should go away. The designs of his reign are pre-eminently spiritual. His religion is spiritual; it is designed to emancipate, purify, sanctify, and glorify the spirit of man, and lift him to spiritual dominion. It was desirable, therefore, not to enchain him to the visible and material, but, on the principle of faith, to bring him into fellowship with the invisible and spiritual. The visible Christ, therefore, gives place to the invisible Spirit, and man is led to walk by faith and not by sight. We only hint at what might form of itself an interesting sermon.

It is apparent that if no more had been done for man after Jesus left the earth, the blessings of salvation could not have come to us. The very

knowledge of salvation must have perished. The Holy Spirit, therefore, was sent on a divine mission, not in the stead of Christ, but on account of Christ, and in our behalf. The Spirit, equally with the Father and the Son, is divine—a divine personality; else we would not be required to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;\* for we can not suppose that we are to be baptized into the name of a mere influence, or of a mere creature of God.

The Spirit was sent—

1. As an *illuminating* Spirit. The mission of Jesus had to go to record. The great facts in the history of redemption had to be set forth with divine certainty and accuracy. The gospel had to be preached truthfully, without mixture of error, to the world. The message had to be adapted with divine skill to the capacities and wants of man. The conditions of salvation had to be made known with divine authority. The principles, and laws, and comforts, and hopes, and duties of Christian life had to be revealed. This was not done by sending the Spirit to inspire every mind and make

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\* Matt. xxviii. 19.

a perfect revelation of these things immediately to every heart; but by communicating the illuminating Spirit to chosen men, to lead *them* into all truth, that they might preach and teach these things to the world. Hence, said Jesus to his apostles, I will send the Paraclete—Advocate, the Spirit of truth—to *you*; and when he is come to *you*, he will convince *the world* of sin. The illuminating and convincing power of the Spirit was to be derived *mediately* to the world through the preaching and teaching of the apostles. Study the text carefully.

2. As a *demonstrating* Spirit. “My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in *demonstration of the Spirit* and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”\* It will be seen at a glance that such claims as the apostles put forth, to reveal the whole counsel of God, and make known, authoritatively, the way of salvation to a perishing world, must be *demonstrated* to be valid and just by suitable accompaniments of a divine embassy. A supernatural

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\* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

claim must be sustained by supernatural evidence. It was part of the Spirit's mission, therefore, to "bear witness" to the apostles "by signs and wonders, and divers miracles."\*

3. As the source of all needful gifts to the infant church, until the revelation of truth should be completed, and the weakness of infancy should be outgrown.†

4. As a source of refreshment, comfort, and strength to Christians for all generations, to dwell in their hearts and shed the love of God abroad there, and to be to them, in the blessed and heavenly influence of the divine presence, an earnest, a foretaste of heaven itself.‡

(I.) It will be seen, then, what great grace is shown to us in sending the Holy Spirit on this mission to our needy race. Without it, there would have been no revelation of Jesus as a Saviour—none but the most fragmentary and unsatisfactory traditionary knowledge of what he was and what he did for us. We are indebted to the Holy Spirit for all the truth concerning Jesus now in

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\* Heb. ii. 4.

† See Eph. iv. 7-16; 1 Cor. xii.

‡ See Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; Rom. v. 5; viii. 5-17; 2 Cor. i. 22; Gal. iv. 6; Eph. iii. 16-19.

our possession, for it has all been communicated through the inspirations of that Spirit in the hearts of the apostles, guiding them into all truth. So true is it, that "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit."\*

(2.) This enlightening and convincing energy of the Spirit having been vouchsafed to the apostles in trust for the world, it is evident that if sinners are to be brought under the convicting and converting power of that Spirit, it must reach them *through the truth which these apostles have spoken*. Take an example. Thousands of sinners were convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment on the day of Pentecost, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. How was it? The Spirit came to the apostles. The apostles spoke the truth. The people heard it. When they heard it, they were pricked in their hearts and cried out, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Peter told 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 Spirit." "Then they *that gladly received the word*

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\* 1 Cor. xii. 3.

were baptized, and the same day were added unto them about three thousand souls." Read Acts ii carefully. To expect, therefore, that the Spirit will directly enter the sinner's heart, and enlighten and convert him, and impart to him the evidence of pardon, is unauthorized; for here, where the Spirit did come from heaven on purpose to convert sinners and to lead them to pardon, he came not to them, but to the apostles, and *through the words of the apostles* put forth converting power and made known the terms of pardon. This will explain why, to be born of the Spirit,\* we must be born of the word,† and why resisting the truth is resisting the Spirit whose truth it is.‡

(3.) It is worthy of note, too, that the Spirit *was not to speak of himself*, but *was to speak of Christ*. (See text.) Men are not to be converted, therefore, by theories of spiritual influence, nor by preaching about the Holy Spirit. Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God.§ The work of the Spirit was to bring men to believe in Christ.

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\* John iii. 5.    † 1 Pet. i. 23; Jas. i. 18.    ‡ Acts vii. 51-53.  
 § 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

(4.) The *fellowship* of the Spirit can only be realized in a fellow-spirit; that is, we can have fellowship with righteousness, goodness, and holiness only when we come into a state and condition of righteousness, goodness, and holiness. The unholy can not have fellowship with the holy, or the carnal with the spiritual. The blind have no enjoyment of visible beauties and grandeurs, nor the deaf of the harmonies of sound. Hence to enjoy the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we must abandon sin and be made pure in heart. This will explain why the Spirit reaches the sinner mediately, through the gospel, for his regeneration, but comes to dwell in his heart as a divine presence, when he is made free from sin. "*Because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."\* "The world can not receive" this Spirit.†

We have, thus far, been considering *what God has done to save us*. We have glanced at the revelations of the grace of God in the work of the Father, in preparing the way during four thousand years, and in sending his Son to save us; in the

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\* Gal. iv. 6.      † John xiv. 17.

work of the Son in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly reign ; in the work of the Spirit in revealing and confirming the truth of the gospel, and establishing in the hearts of men the peace and love of God.

All this is grace, wondrous and adorable grace ; so that if we are saved at all, we are saved by grace.

We will proceed next to inquire what *we* must do to be saved.

## SERMON VII.

### THE HUMAN SIDE.

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”—ACTS xvi. 30.

HAVING answered the inquiry, What has God done to save us? we come now to the second great question: What must we do to be saved?

Salvation is not mechanical. It is not arbitrary. It is not lifting the soul, by an arm of divine power, out of a certain state called a state of condemnation into another state called a state of justification, as if a change of *position* could avail any thing, or as if the mere assertion of power on the part of God could essentially change a rational nature. It must be constantly remembered that the salvation of which we are treating is the salvation of rational and moral beings; it is the deliverance of such beings from ignorance, corrupt desires and

practices, alienated affections, and guilt, and their entrance into knowledge, purity, righteousness, holiness, and forgiveness. In a word, it is salvation from sin—from the love of sin, the practice of sin, the guilt of sin, the alienations of sin, and the death which is the wages of sin. It can not be accomplished, therefore, without the introduction of light into the benighted soul; nor without establishing convictions of truth in the heart; nor without enlisting the affections in behalf of new objects; nor without a transfer of confidence and love to a new authority. The sinner must be enlightened, convinced, and persuaded. This involves the exercise of his own powers, since this enlightenment, conviction, and persuasion can only come through truth and love communicated to him, which he must learn, understand, and appropriate. And while it is true that all the means requisite to accomplish this end are divine, and that we are dependent on the grace of God for the whole system of means and agencies necessary to recover the soul from apostasy, so that, without this grace, we must have perished; it is also true that unless we *accept* and *appropriate* these means and agencies, they are to

us as though they had no existence, and we must inevitably perish. The sun shines in vain for us if we open not our eyes to behold it. Light, air, earth, water—all means of life and enjoyment in nature which God has so bountifully supplied, will only sustain life and impart happiness as we make them our own by appropriation according to the laws that God has established.

We, therefore, regard that theory which teaches that man is passive in regeneration as intrinsically false, and most mischievous in its tendencies. If he is passive, he does not hear, or think, or love, or hate, or believe, or understand. Unless God overrides all the laws of man's intellectual and moral nature, and works a miracle equal to that which created the universe out of nothing, there is no thought, wish, love, or hate changed or influenced in such a regeneration; it is a mere dream, a phantasy, which the imaginative and excitable may identify with some psychological experience, and fancy that regeneration is theirs; but which others, less liable to sudden emotion, will wait for a whole life-time and fail to receive. On the other hand, if it is a miracle, then the sinner can take no step toward salvation until that

miracle is wrought. Christ, the Church, the Gospel, are all vanities until that miracle takes place. The sinner can not help being what he is, and the most nonsensical of all questions is that of our text—for it might as well be supposed to come from a dead man, and might as well be answered to a dead man, if this doctrine of the sinner's passivity is correct.

But this question *was* asked, and was gravely entertained, and definitely answered by the apostles; thereby proving (1) that the sinner *can* do something to be saved; and (2) that there is something to be done by him if he would be saved. He can do nothing to *procure* salvation—Jesus Christ has procured it for him. He can do nothing to *merit* salvation; he is guilty, and wretched, and lost; the grace of God alone is his hope. But when the grace of God brings salvation, he can take it; when Jesus presents the cup of salvation, he can accept it and drink of the waters of life. When the mercy of God invites him, he can *come*. When God speaks, he can hear. When God testifies, he can believe. When God stoops over him, in the person of Christ, with richest love and tenderest compassion, he can

open his heart to receive that love. When the Spirit pours in on his benighted soul the beams of heavenly truth, and reveals sin and a Saviour, he can learn to hate the one and love the other. When the terms of salvation are made known, he can obey them. In a word, the Father originates, the Son reveals, the Spirit applies through apostolic ministry the saving power needed by us; but we *appropriate* it, each one for himself. The grace of God provides the feast of salvation, but the sinner must *eat* it, and thus make it his own.

Nor is this a feast that has to be specially provided for every sinner. It has been provided once for all. We need only to learn of it, and come and partake freely.

It becomes us, then, to inquire anxiously, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?" But let us first have a distinct understanding of the question.

1. It is not what God has done for us. That has been already considered.

2. It is not what a patriarch or a Jew was required to do. "The fullness of time" has come. God, who spoke at sundry times and in divers parcels in times past unto the fathers by the proph-

ets, has now spoken by his Son; and the language from heaven is, "HEAR HIM."

3. It is not what Jesus told particular persons to do when he was here. He told a young man to keep the commandments of the law,\* because the applicant was a Jew, and the Jewish law was yet in force; and he further told him to go and sell all that he had, and give it to the poor, because he wished to reveal to him the real plague-spot in his nature. This was individual and special. He opened the gates of Paradise to the dying thief, because it was his prerogative on earth to forgive sins when, where, and how he pleased. But he is no longer here. The individual and special has given place to the universal; a system of salvation for all men has been established; a general act of amnesty has been passed; and the language now is, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."†

Not until Jesus bowed his head on the cross, and said, "It is finished," did the law lose its authority. Not until Jesus, after his resurrection, said, "All power in heaven and in earth is given

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\* Mark x. 19.

† Rev. xxii. 17.

to me,"\* do we find a true starting-point for our inquiry. Not only was the old Testament preparatory, but the mission of John the Baptist, and the personal ministry of Jesus, were also preparatory. Much is said in the four gospels concerning salvation, but it is said in anticipation of a new order of things to be established after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.

We will next point out the persons who were divinely authorized to answer this question.

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\* Matt. xxviii. 18.

## SERMON VIII.

### THE EMBASSADORS OF CHRIST.

“Therefore for Christ are we ambassadors, as though God were entreating by us : we pray on Christ’s behalf, Be reconciled to God.”—II COR. v. 20.

THE word *presbus*, both in classical and scriptural use, denotes an ambassador, though primarily it means an old man, and its secondary meaning evidently grew out of the fact that old men were usually appointed to this responsible position. An ambassador represents the majesty and the authority of the power that appoints him, and stands in its behalf and in its stead. In the absence of our Lord, the apostles are his ambassadors, acting “in Christ’s stead.” The authority and power of Christ are on them, and that which they do as ambassadors is simply Christ Jesus acting by them. He committed into their hands the word of reconciliation. They went out to a rebellious world, to entreat sinners to be reconciled

to God, and to propound to them the terms of reconciliation.

Some are disposed to exalt the mission of Christ against that of the apostles, reasoning that he was so much their superior in excellence and in wisdom, that his words are entitled to the greater weight ; and, that from the four gospels, therefore, we can better learn the way of life than from the Acts of the Apostles. This is a mistaken view.

1. It is a mistake to separate these missions, as if Christ were in one and not in the other. The truth is, that the mission of the apostles was the mission of Christ. It was the Christ working through them—the Spirit of Christ in them, and the authority of Christ upon them, that gave to their mission all its significance. As well argue that because a king is greater than his ambassador, therefore his words are of more weight than the words of the ambassador—whereas, the words of the latter are the words of the former, and derive their weight especially from the fact that they are such. The king speaks through the ambassador.

2. Each portion of the Scriptures is most valuable for that for which it was specially designed. The design of the four gospels is to make us

acquainted with the Christ, and with the evidences on which we are to believe in him.\* *For this purpose* they are superior to any other scriptures. But it does not follow that they are superior for all purposes. To teach us how to come to Christ—to instruct us what *we* must do to be saved—the Acts are superior to the four gospels; for this book records especially the entreaties and instructions of the chosen ambassadors who were sent forth to reconcile the world to God.

3. The personal work of Jesus was a *preparatory* work. He discussed the *principles* of his approaching reign; and in his life, death, and resurrection, God laid the foundation of the spiritual temple.† But the apostles were, under Christ, the builders of the temple, and we must learn from them how we may build on this foundation, and be living stones in this temple.‡

4. The Holy Spirit was given to these men to “guide them into all truth,” and to bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said to them;§ so that in listening to them, we listen to Christ.

\*See John xx. 31; Luke i. 1-4.      † 1 Cor. iii. 11, compared with Isa. xxviii. 16.

‡ Eph. ii. 19-22; 1 Peter ii. 4, 5.

§ John xiv. 26; xvi. 13.

Let us inquire now into the work committed to their hands.

“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”\* Here these men are clothed with authority to rule in the kingdom of Christ. But as many refer this to the future, we will not pause to examine critically its leading terms, nor will we rely on it as proof, further than its obvious connection with other passages, yet to be quoted, may suggest itself to the reader.

“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”† This, although addressed to Peter as the foremost of the apostles, evidently was only applicable to him as the leading one of the twelve, as may be seen from the application of the same language to all the apostles in another paragraph.‡

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\* Luke xxii. 28-30.

† Matt. xvi. 19.

‡ Matt. xviii. 18.

The verse immediately preceding speaks of the building of *the church* of Christ, and the change of the phraseology from church to kingdom does not indicate a different institution, but marks entrance into the kingdom as association with the church. This, then, clearly refers to apostolical authority to be exercised *here*, in building the church of Christ, in propounding the terms of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. From the apostles, therefore, we are to learn how we enter into the kingdom of heaven, how we may be incorporated with the church of Christ.

“He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”\* This explains the *binding* and *loosing* spoken of in Matt. xvi. 19. If we would learn, then, of the remission of sins, we must learn of these men, after the Holy Spirit shall have been received by them.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of

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\* John xx. 22, 23.

the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world."\* This is too definite to be mistaken. *Exousia*, power, is *authority* to do a thing, and might to execute it. The authority of Moses has ceased; Christ Jesus is now the lawgiver. About to leave the earth, he commissions the apostles to act in his stead, and endows them with authority to make disciples, to baptize, and to teach the great lessons of duty. This authority is to continue to the end of the present state of things, and is co-extensive with the race of man. If we would learn, then, how to become disciples of Jesus, we must learn from the apostles. If we would learn the will of God respecting baptism, they must teach us. If we would be instructed in the whole range of duties belonging to Christian life, it must be through their teaching. Their ministry will complete the revelation of the will of God until the end of time.

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\* Matt. xxviii. 18-20.

But not only were they thus authorized—they received special directions as to *when* and *where* they were to enter on their ambassadorial duties. “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”\* “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”† Jerusalem, then, was the place where they were to begin their ministrations. The time when they should begin was when the promised Spirit should descend, and endow them with power from on high and lead them into all truth. This brings us to Acts ii, to the history of the opening of the kingdom of heaven.

Here are the apostles; here is the descended Spirit endowing them with power from on high; here is the preaching of the gospel by inspired apostles, convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God; here are convicted sinners crying out, “What must we do?” Here are the chosen

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\* Luke xxiv. 49.

† Acts i. 8.

men, Peter at their head, with the keys of the kingdom, proclaiming, in the name of Jesus, the terms on which sins will be remitted; here are thousands of believing penitents baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; here is "the apostles' teaching" in which the converts continued. From this on, we can trace the progress of these ambassadors in fulfilling their commission, through Judea, Samaria, and to Gentile lands.

There remains but one more fact to be noted. Paul was not included in this commission. He received a special commission. "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me."\* It will be seen this

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\* Acts xxvi. 16-18.

covers the same ground with the commission given to the eleven.

It can not be doubted that we have learned the source to which to apply for an answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The next sermon will present the reply.

## SERMON IX.

### THE TERMS OF FORGIVENESS.

“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”—JOHN XX. 23.

WE come now to consider the instances in which the question, *What must I do to be saved?* was asked of the apostles, and answered by them.

I. The first is in Acts ii. Having already several times referred to the contents of this chapter, and asked the reader's attention thereto, we shall presume on his acquaintance with the facts, and avoid unnecessary details. Briefly: the apostles preached Christ—his Messiahship, his death, resurrection, ascension, and Lordship—to an immense audience of sinful hearers. These hearers were pricked in their hearts by what they heard, and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They were evidently convicted of sin and of right-

eousness—of the righteousness of Jesus of Nazareth, whom God had raised from the dead and exalted on high a Prince and a Saviour ; and of their own awful sin in rejecting and condemning him. Their language indicates extreme anguish of soul, such as could only flow from a belief of the truth of what they had heard. This shows us how the Holy Spirit convicted the world of sin : it was through the truth preached by the apostles. Now comes the answer to their question :

“Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Here observe : they were not told they could do nothing—that “doing is a deadly thing ;” they were not invited to an altar, that Christians might pray for the Holy Spirit to come down and grant them the evidence of pardon ; nor were they required to “tell an experience,” that Christians might judge as to the genuineness of their conversion and vote them admission to baptism. No : they were told to do two things : 1. Repent. 2. Be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. “Then they that gladly re-

ceived the word were baptized." They showed their repentance in a prompt and cheerful acceptance of the terms, and were immediately baptized. Is it possible to doubt that the remission of sins was theirs? Now, remember that Jesus said, "Repentance and remission of sins shall be preached in my name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."\* When we learn, therefore, how repentance and remission of sins were here made known, we learn just how the proclamation was to be made to all nations.

As Peter was here with "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and did actually admit thousands into the kingdom, we can learn, in the light of the facts here presented, what Jesus meant when he said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God."† We have both water and Spirit here. The Spirit, through the ministry of the apostles, led them to faith and repentance, planting the seed of a new life in their souls; and thus believing and repenting, they were baptized—born of water—and entered into the kingdom of God.

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\* Luke xxiv. 47.

† John iii. 5.

To believe in Jesus, repent of sin, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, is to be born of water and of the Spirit.

2. The next case is that of Cornelius.\* Although the question is not formally asked, it is evident that the burden of this man's cry to God was, Lord, what must I do? For when the angel assures him that his prayers have been heard, he adds, "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."† What he ought to do was, therefore, the burden of his inquiries. He was a devout, benevolent, pious man; but he was in darkness as to his spiritual state, as many good and worthy people are. He had no clear knowledge of the will of God, and was groping in the dark as to what God required of him. That he knew something of the mission of Jesus, is evident from verse 37; but how he, a Gentile, could avail himself of the benefits of that mission and be assured of salvation, he did not know. He had a heart to do any thing and be any thing that God might require; but he was in darkness as to what

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\* Acts x.

† Acts x. 6.

God would have him do. There was needed, in this case, no conviction of sin, for he was already convicted; nor persuasives to repentance, for he had already chosen to live righteously in the fear of God. True, the Jews spoke of it as "repentance unto life;"\* but this must be understood either as indicating that *change of mind* which repentance literally imports, or it must be understood as spoken of Gentiles generally, and not of Cornelius and his family particularly. There was simply needed light as to the will of God and the way of salvation. Now, leaving out of view all that was extraordinary and miraculous in this instance, growing out of the fact that he was the first Gentile convert, and his case, therefore, required special attestations of the willingness of God to receive Gentiles into his kingdom; let us look at the facts as they bear immediately on his salvation and that of his household. (1.) Peter is sent for; because he, as the leader among the apostles, possessed the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and must open to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. (2.) Peter preached the gospel to him and his

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\* Acts xi. 18.

household, unfolding the mission of Christ to save, and winding up with this important declaration: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." While Peter spoke these words, the Holy Spirit descended on all that heard the word, in miraculous manifestations similar to those which were realized among the Jewish disciples at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; "for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." Then Peter said, "Can any man forbid water; that these [Gentiles] should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we [Jews]? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

These two things, then, they did: 1. They believed in Jesus. 2. They were baptized in the name of the Lord. The promise fulfilled to them was, that "through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

A word of caution may be needful here, owing to the use sometimes made of the extraordinary manifestations connected with this case. Sinners are told that as these Gentile converts were bap-

tized in the Holy Spirit before they received water-baptism, so all sinners should look for Spirit-baptism, that they may know they are converted. We ask our readers, therefore, to note,

*a.* That this baptism in the Spirit was special, for a special purpose; namely, that the *Gentiles* might have the same token of divine favor as the Jews, and be equally entitled to the blessings of the gospel.\*

*b.* That this descent of the Spirit did not convict them of sin, nor change their hearts—for this had already been done before Peter came. Cornelius “feared God with all his house,” was devout, gave much alms, and prayed to God constantly. Nor did the Spirit, by this visitation, impart faith to them; for we read,† concerning this very case, that God had chosen that the Gentiles, by the mouth of Peter, “*should hear the word of the gospel and believe.*” Nor did this baptism of the Spirit assure them of pardon; for Peter had already informed them that this was received by believers *through the name* of Jesus; and on this account he commanded them to be bap-

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\* Read Acts xi. 1-18.

† Acts xv. 7.

tized in water—in the name of the Lord. The descent of the Spirit was evidently a special visitation for the special purpose mentioned in chapter xi. The simple facts are—they believed; they were baptized; they were numbered among the saved. Thus was “granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life.”

3. The third instance is that of Saul of Tarsus. Of his commission, we have accounts in Acts xi, xxii, and xxvi. Let the reader examine these chapters carefully.

Saul was an honest, upright, conscientious man before he became a Christian.\* Touching the righteousness of the law, he was without blame among men, and he lived before God “in all good conscience.” This proves that a man may be very sincere, and yet a great sinner—for he afterward confessed himself to have been “the chief of sinners;” and that a man may be very moral, and yet be guilty before God through his ignorance and unbelief. Even ignorance is sometimes a great sin—where men might know the truth and will not. He was a bitter persecutor of Christians. He

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\* See Acts xxiii. 1; Phil. iii. 6.

says afterward, he “did it ignorantly, in unbelief;”\* but he does not excuse either the ignorance or the unbelief. It is to be feared that the plea of ignorance and sincerity will prove a vain one on the part of very many who might have known the truth if they would. Yet this sort of sin is by no means so heinous as sin against light and knowledge; because the nature still retains *honesty*—an element without which there can be no worthy character. A man may be very ardent in error and wrong, simply because of the noble qualities of honesty and earnestness; and, if righted in his convictions, will prove a most serviceable Christian; while the respectable sinner and the man of indifference, with weak convictions and feeble purposes, never become eminent either for badness or goodness.

The Lord knew the excellent material in the nature of this bold and earnest blasphemer and persecutor, and selected him as a “chosen vessel” for high and noble purposes. While he was on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, on a bloody mission, “breathing out threatenings and slaugh-

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\* 1 Tim. i. 13.

ter" against the disciples of Jesus, the Lord appeared to him in overpowering majesty, and addressed him in the Hebrew tongue: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He fell on the ground, overwhelmed with amazement, and replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" Again the voice spoke: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." At once he saw the great mistake under which he had labored, and with the promptness and honesty which ever characterized him, he at once surrendered. An admirable example. Oh, how we higgle, and equivocate, and smother our best convictions, often until the very capability to deal honestly with the truth is almost lost! "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he cried in instant submission.

It is worthy of remark that this question was not answered, further than to direct him to Damascus, and there he should learn what to do. Oh, ye who tarry for visions, and pray to be converted as Saul was converted, by a sign from heaven, reflect that even Saul did not thus learn what to do to be saved! We saw, in the case of Cornelius, that the angel did not tell him what to do, but directed him to Peter. Here, the Lord

himself does not tell, but directs the inquirer to Damascus, to learn from human lips what he must do to be saved. Why is this, but to guard us from seeking for signs and wonders? But you ask, Why, then, did Jesus appear to him at all? Read Acts xxvi. 16-18, and you will learn that—not to make him a Christian, but—to make him a *minister* and a *witness*, it was needful that the Lord should appear to him. He was to be an apostle, and a witness of the resurrection of Jesus; and this he could not be unless he saw the Lord after his resurrection. Now, as you are not called to be a witness or an apostle, but simply a Christian, you do not need such a revelation. Saul went to Damascus, and was there three days and nights fasting and praying, in great anguish of soul. Ananias, specially commissioned, went to him and told him what he must do:

“And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”\*

Immediately he arose, and was baptized, and

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\* Acts xxii. 16.

renouncing his own righteousness as worthless, received the righteousness which is by faith.\*

Here is a clear case. Saul believed in Jesus Christ, turned away from his sins, and was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus ; and his sins were washed away in the blood of the everlasting covenant. He was thus saved "as a pattern to all who should hereafter believe on Jesus to life everlasting."†

4. We have yet another instance. The Philipian jailer, startled by the circumstances attending the imprisonment of Paul and Silas, cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The answer was :

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."‡

The question here was not prompted by faith, but by alarm. He was an ignorant heathen. He was in all the blindness of heathenism. The question does not come *after* sermon, as on the day of Pentecost, as the fruit of intelligent faith and deep conviction ; but *before* sermon, excited by alarm on

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\* Phil. iii. 7-9.

† 1 Tim. i. 16.

‡ Acts xvi. 31.

account of the earthquake and the miracles he had seen. It is not asked by a Jew, like Saul, who knew the Jewish scriptures, and who, as soon as convinced of the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, was prepared at once to believe. Nor was it, as with Cornelius, the question of a devout worshiper of God, who already knew of the character and work of Jesus Christ. The answer, therefore, in this case, begins back of the answers we have already quoted—it begins at the very beginning; for it is an answer to one who cries out of the depths of utter ignorance and guilt. Paul and Silas then preached the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. They received the message, and were “baptized the same hour of the night,” and the jailer “rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” They heard the gospel—they believed—they repented—they were baptized—they rejoiced in God.

Thus we have presented the facts as given to us in the Scriptures. It is a plain story; it is definite; it leaves no room for mistake or doubt. Our mistakes and doubts arise from the prejudices we bring with us to the examination of the Script-

ures. It is as plain as day that the sinner is required to do three things in order to be saved. 1. He must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. He must repent. 3. He must be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord. Then the word of the Lord, which endures forever, assures him of salvation.

There is but one point of difficulty that remains to be noted. It is sometimes urged that these answers are not the same. But we will not insult the intelligence of our readers with an elaborate explanation ; a hint will suffice. It is plain that if a *believer* asks the question, he will not be told to believe, for that he has done already. A believing penitent will not, for the same reason, be told either to believe or repent. But an unbeliever will be told first of all to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the unbelieving jailer is told to believe ; the believing Jews are told to repent and be baptized ; Saul, the believing penitent, is told to arise and be baptized. But they are all brought to the same landing-place. Of every one of them it could be said, when saved, that he had believed, repented, and been baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.

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One word more: this is a present salvation of the soul from sin; it is not a final salvation in heaven. That shall be hereafter considered.

## SERMON X.

### FAITH.

“Now faith is confidence in things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”—HEB. xi. 1.

HAVING learned what are the conditions of salvation, we propose to speak of them more in detail. We devote this sermon to *Faith*.

#### I. *What is Faith?*

Take up a Greek lexicon and turn to the word *pistis*. You will find the definitions, “trust in others; faith, especially faith or belief in a higher power; generally, persuasion of a thing, confidence, assurance.” Turn to *pisteuo*, and you will find “to believe, trust in, put faith in, rely on a person or thing.” The first of these terms is that which is translated *faith*, in the Scriptures; the second is that which is generally translated *to believe*; as, for instance, John v. 47: “If you do not believe (*pisteuseete*) his writings, how can you be-

lieve (*pisteuseete*) my words?" And John xx. 31: "But these are written that you might believe (*pisteuseete*) that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing (*pisteuontes*) you might have life through his name."

Unless there is some special appropriation of this word in the Scriptures, we must conclude, from these definitions, that faith, as it respects facts or principles, is simply a belief or persuasion of them as true; as it respects persons, confidence or trust in them, in the character, office, or work in which they are presented to us. We have in the New Testament two descriptions of faith, which will help us to understand the apostolic usage with respect to this word. Touching Abraham's faith, it is said: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform."\* Here *a full persuasion of the truth of God's promises* is the description of strong faith. In the text we have chosen, faith is described as "the substance of things hoped for, the

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\* Rom. iv. 20, 21.

evidence of things not seen." *Hupostasis*, here rendered *substance*, is literally, *that whereon any thing else stands, or is supported*. Faith is therefore the *substans*—that which *stands under* the things hoped for. Taken objectively, it is the *basis* or *foundation* of the things hoped for; taken subjectively, it is *confidence*; for that which stands under—the foundation—is that which gives confidence as to the things built upon it. *Elenkos*, translated *evidence*, taken objectively, means *demonstration, proof*; taken subjectively, *conviction, assurance*. We have, in the text, given the subjective sense of these terms, because it is the subjective sense we are after—that is, what faith is *in us*, in our hearts, as a principle and a force in the soul.

In the broad sense in which the apostle here defines faith, it is a persuasion or conviction concerning things not seen—not only as to the future things hoped for, but also as to the past. Were we shut up to the evidence of our senses, and capable only of being moved by what we actually know, the sphere of influences bearing on us would be exceedingly circumscribed, and we must necessarily occupy a merely animal plane of life. Our

own experience alone could guide us; and our instincts being much feebler than those of animals, we would necessarily have an inferior place even among animals. But we are capable of faith; that is, we have faculties in the exercise of which we can believe that which we never saw, and hope for that which we have never realized, being persuaded of the truth concerning them by the evidence presented to us. We thus are enabled to appropriate the experience of others—to incorporate other lives into our own, and enlarge immensely the sphere of influences going to make up life and character. Since God has appealed to this capacity of our nature, we are not only admitted to the realities of past ages as unfolded to us in history, but are admitted into the very heavens by faith, and are permitted to learn of and trust in the invisibilities of the spiritual universe, and thus enabled to “endure as seeing Him who is invisible.” The past and the future are brought into the present, and the invisible becomes as if visible, by the power of believing. Hence, as the gospel deals with our spiritual nature and with spiritual realities, it will be seen that faith—conviction concerning things unseen—must necessarily be the

*hupostasis*, the *substance*, the foundation, that which *stands under* Christian character, Christian effort, Christian enjoyments. We need not pause here to show how important faith is, even in the affairs of the present life—how the family would dissolve if faith were to be withdrawn from the hearts of its members; how the State would crumble if the faith of man in man were destroyed; how the wheels of commerce would be clogged if men could not deal with each other on the principle of faith; how impossible education would be, and the growth of science and of literature, if men could not believe. We merely hint at this. A hint is enough to satisfy every thoughtful person that faith is the largest force that moves humanity in its grandest marches, its noblest achievements, its highest joys; and that it is not a mere arbitrary decree that has made it the basis of all that is good and noble and holy in religious life. It is in wise adaptation to the capacities and wants of our nature that faith has been ordained as the foundation and fountain of spiritual life and enjoyment.

It will be evident at a glance, from what has been said, that the influence of faith over its pos-

essor will depend on the *objects* that faith rests on. If he puts confidence in that which is true and pure, he will come into fellowship with truth and purity; if his faith rests on that which is false and corrupt, false and corrupting influences will pour in upon his own soul; and according to his faith it will be unto him. Manliness, generosity, magnanimity, may all be nurtured in us by faith in that which is manly, generous, and magnanimous. If we are so foolish as to put our trust in that which is mean, selfish, sensual, or profligate, just in proportion to the vigor and honesty of our faith, will we be transformed into the likeness of that in which we trust. Hence a second important inquiry is:

II. *What is the proper object of Faith?*

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."\*

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."†

"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."‡

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\* Acts xvi. 31.

† Acts x. 43.

‡ John iii. 16.

It is useless to multiply quotations. This is the uniform tenor of New Testament teaching. The object of our faith is the Son of God. We are asked to put our trust in a *person*. That person embodies in himself all of wisdom, power, and goodness that we need. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and we are made complete in him who is the head of all principality and power.\* He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.† God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.‡ He is Son of Man, Son of God, Prince of Life, Captain of Salvation, Lord of all. He was dead, but is alive; and liveth for evermore, and has the keys of death and of hades.¶ He died for our sins, and rose from the dead for our justification, and has become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.§ He is now both Lord and Christ, possessing all power in heaven and in earth, and will reign until all enemies are put under his feet; and he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come to God by him.¶¶

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\* Col. ii. 9, 10.

† 1 Cor. i. 30.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.

¶ Rev. i. 18.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4; Heb. v. 9.

¶¶ Acts ii. 36; Matt. xxviii. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. vii. 25.

We are asked to believe *in him*—to put our trust in him as able and willing to save, fully persuaded that he is able to keep what we commit to him against the day of God.\* Here let us guard against a common error. The faith that saves is not simply *an assent* to the truth concerning Jesus. If I am asked if I believe that A. B. is a physician; I answer, Yes. But that assent to an acknowledged truth is not *faith in the physician*. If I am dangerously ill, and know that nothing but superior medical skill can save me from death, and I send for A. B., and say, "I put my case into your hands; I have confidence in your medical knowledge and skill; I trust my life in your keeping; whatever you command, I will obey; what you forbid, shall be forbidden; what you prescribe, I will accept: then I give evidence that I have faith *in him*, being willing to intrust my life to his skill. So a man may assent, in a general way, to the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, without putting his trust in him as *his* Saviour. It is a solemn thing to put one's life, character, and destiny in the keeping of another, and trust,

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\*2 Tim. i. 12.

for time and eternity, the power of that Being to save from death and hell. It ought to be very deliberately done. When done intelligently, it is one of the sublimest acts the soul can ever perform. It is a great thing to be convinced of our helplessness and need of a Saviour; it is a greater thing to learn to trust in Jesus as that Saviour, and to make ourselves over to him in solemn covenant, to trust his power to save, and to do whatever he commands. This is the faith in Christ Jesus which the gospel enjoins.

We are led here to notice another distinction of some importance. Faith is sometimes merely an *intellectual* exercise; but gospel faith has a *moral* character. If asked to believe certain historical facts which in nowise involve any thing of duty or of interest on my part, it is merely a question of evidence—which I examine and decide, intellectually, according to the testimony. But if asked to believe a fact which involves my interests, and which, if accepted, must necessarily revolutionize my hopes and aims—as, for instance, that the original heir to an estate which, if he be not living, is mine, is really alive and about to appear to assert his right—it is not simply a thing of the intellect.

My *heart* is concerned in it. My *interests* are involved in it. The truth may be unwelcome. To accept it may require me to yield up cherished, though unlawful, hopes and ambitions. I may be unwilling to do this. I may, therefore, through moral obliquity, pervert the testimony, or neglect it, or refuse to give it credence. If, in spite of the pleadings of self-interest, I honestly examine the testimony, and admit its real force, and accept the consequences, I perform an act of high moral bearing—I believe with my heart.

Before the late Franco-German war, the evidence of the superior military force and preparation of Prussia was clear and abundant. The emperor of France and his counselors had all the means of knowing how unripe were their own military preparations compared with those of the Germans. As a simple question of fact, it was easy of decision. But the question involved their interests and their passions. They suffered themselves to be blinded by ambition and by hate, and their unbelief, so terribly disastrous in its consequences, was a moral obliquity. Honesty of heart would have preserved them from the mad enterprise

which so suddenly blotted a magnificent empire from the map of Europe, and humiliated a gallant nation in the very dust.

Now the acceptance of Jesus involves grave moral consequences. It is revolutionary. It calls for the surrender of all sinful desires, the abandonment of all sinful practices, the sacrifice of all merely earthly and sensual desires and ambitions. It involves self-abnegation, humiliation, renunciation of cherished hopes and desires, it may be, and the consecration of life to spiritual aims and a spiritual service. This may lead the heart to deal dishonestly with the truth; to avoid its clearest light and pervert its meaning. The election of Christ as our Lord and Saviour is an election of our own lives to the service of truth and holiness. If, in the face of all this, I deal fairly with the truth concerning Jesus, and allow it to have its full force on my soul in producing faith, it is an action of the heart as well as of the head—a triumph over a low and narrow selfishness and over the pleadings of sinful desire, which stamps it as an act of moral excellence and grandeur. All this belongs to that act which the Scriptures

describe as *believing with all the heart*.<sup>\*</sup> This explains why condemnation is attached to unbelief.<sup>†</sup> In a merely intellectual act we are necessarily governed by the preponderance of evidence, and can not help either our belief or unbelief; but in a moral act, where the heart is concerned in the result, we may deal dishonestly with the truth, and our failure to believe is traced to our unwillingness to receive the light. It is treason to the truth that ails us. "How can ye believe," said Jesus, "who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?"<sup>‡</sup>

Let us say, in conclusion under this head, that a hearty reliance on Jesus, as the Christ, the Son of God, such as leads us to trust in him for salvation, and accept him as our Sovereign, renouncing all other trusts and sovereignties, and listening only to his voice of counsel and command, is the faith that saves. It is all we need to be concerned about. It is of very inferior importance how much or how little of truth there may be in theological doctrines concerning original sin, divine

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<sup>\*</sup> Acts viii. 37; Rom. x. 8-10. <sup>†</sup> Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 18-21.

<sup>‡</sup> John v. 44.

foreknowledge, predestination, effectual calling, or final perseverance. If you should master them all theoretically, they can not save you; if you should remain forever ignorant of all these theories, you may still be a Christian. You know you are a sinner. You want to be released from your sins. You dread to meet God as you are, and greatly desire to be at peace with him. Is Jesus an all-sufficient Saviour? That is the great question. Is he what he professed to be? Can you trust him—put your life and destiny in his hands? Are you ready to listen to his voice, and walk in his ways? If no, all the theology in the universe can not save you. If yes, it but needs that you submit to his authority, and learn his will.

## SERMON XI.

### FAITH.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, searching the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few.”—ACTS xvii. 11, 12.

OUR third inquiry is,  
III. *How is faith obtained?*

To save our readers from confusion, we must attend to a text which is often misinterpreted. “For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”\* It is hence taught that *faith* is the gift of God, and that no one can possess it until God bestows it. Sinners are, therefore, taught to pray to God for faith—to seek it at the altar until it shall please God to hear their prayer. But here is a great dif-

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\* Eph. ii. 8, 9.

ficulty. Without faith, the sinner can not pray! How is he to get a start in the right direction? Faith is the conviction of things not seen. Now, if the sinner is convinced that the unseen God will bestow faith upon him, if he asks in the name of Jesus, he already has faith! And if he is not thus convinced, how can he pray at all?—for “he that comes to God *must believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”\* “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?”† How then can an unbeliever pray for faith? If this view of the text in Ephesians be correct, the sinner can do nothing but wait, prayerless and hopeless, until it pleases God to bestow the gift of faith. It is utterly useless to call on men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let us ask: Is it the *faith*, or the *salvation*, that is here said to be the gift of God? There is a grammatical reason for referring it to salvation and not to faith; but as we are attempting plain

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\* Heb. xi. 6.

† Rom. x. 14.

things for plain people, we will seek a test more readily understood by all. Whatever this "gift of God" is, there is one thing affirmed of it in the ninth verse; namely, that it is "not of works." Now, will any one charge the apostle with the foolishness of saying that *faith* is "not of works"? It is surely a folly of which we can not suspect the apostle. But if we understand him to say that the *salvation* is "not of works," there is sense and fitness in it. Then the salvation, and not the faith, was the gift of God. Alford's note on the text is: "And this (your salvation; your having been saved) not of yourselves: God's is the gift, viz., of your salvation."

Another text which gives some trouble is found in Acts xiii. 48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." We observe on this that Alford renders it, "As many as were *disposed* to eternal life, believed." In his note, he says: "The meaning of this word *disposed* must be determined by the context. The Jews had 'judged themselves unworthy of eternal life;' the Gentiles, as many as were disposed to eternal life, believed. *By whom* so disposed, is not *here* declared; nor need the word be in this place further particular-

ized. We know that it is God who worketh in us the will to believe, and that the preparation of the heart is of Him; but to find *in this text* pre-ordination to life asserted, is to force both the word and the context to a meaning which they do not contain. The word in the original is the same as in 1 Cor. xvi. 15, where it is said that the house of Stephanas '*have addicted themselves* to the ministry of the saints;' and in Rom. xiii. 1, where it is said that 'the powers that be, are *ordained* of God;' in both of which places the agents are expressed, whereas here the word is used absolutely, without an agent expressed."

This is very clear critical testimony from one who evidently sympathizes with the Calvinistic doctrine, but is too honest a critic to force a text into the service unjustly. We will hear another scholar on the same point:

"As many as were *disposed* for eternal life, believed; for the word *tetagmenōs*, which we here render *ordained*, is used in this very book (ch. xx. 13) to signify a man, not outwardly ordained, but *inwardly disposed*, or one determined not by God, but by his own inclinations, to do such a thing; as

when it is said St. Paul went on foot from Assos, *for so he was disposed.*" \*

Let us say, further, that Bagster's Analytical Greek Lexicon gives the following definitions of *tassō* in New Testament use: "To arrange; to set, appoint, in a certain station (Luke vii. 8; Rom. xiii. 1); to set, devote, to a pursuit (1 Cor. xvi. 15); to dispose, frame, for an object (Acts xiii. 48); to arrange, appoint, place or time (Matt. xxvii. 16; Acts xxiii. 23); to attest, assign (Acts xxii. 10); to settle, decide (Acts xv. 2).

Now, it is no difference whether we understand the text as affirming that God disposed them to seek eternal life, or that they themselves were so disposed—the one implies the other. We have merely intended to relieve the reader of the false impression that the text teaches that faith depends on a personal election to eternal life. If still any doubt hangs over the reader's mind as to the meaning of the text, he must settle that doubt in the light of other texts that are not at all doubtful; and to some of these we will point him.

We select three texts, clear and unmistakable ones, to tell us how faith comes :

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\* Dr. Schaeffer, in Lange's Acts.

“Peter rose up and said to them, Men and brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth *should hear the word of the gospel and believe.*”\*

This refers, as the intelligent reader will at once perceive, to the conversion of Cornelius and his household. It is all the more important on that account; because on that occasion there was a supernatural outpouring of the Spirit, and many supposed that faith was imparted through that outpouring. Hence many look and pray for such an outpouring now, that sinners may be blessed with faith. But Peter declares that their faith did not result from that outpouring, but that the appointment of God was that the Gentiles might, “by his mouth, hear the word of the gospel, and believe.” Their faith came by hearing the word of God.

Now consider the text at the head of this sermon. It was said of the Bereans; and to Bereans we are now talking. It says the Jews at Berea were “more noble” than the Thessalonian Jews.

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\* Acts xv. 7.

At Thessalonica, instead of listening honestly to the gospel and investigating its claims, they were "moved with envy," and "took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar." They were not only indisposed to hear and examine, but they were determined not to hear, and to let none others hear, if they could prevent it. They were evidently not "disposed to eternal life," but "judged themselves unworthy" of it. The Bereans, on the contrary, "received the word with all readiness of mind." They gave the truth a fair hearing, disposed neither to accept nor reject blindly, but after faithful investigation. Hence they "*searched* the Scriptures"—the Jewish Scriptures, for the Christian Scriptures were not yet written—gave attentive and pains-taking diligence to investigate, to learn whether what they heard concerning the Christ, was so. How many complain that they can not believe, who never *searched* the Scriptures! Some of the avowed opponents of revelation have confessed, and others have exhibited, their ignorance of that which they opposed. And how many who professed to search, have searched very partially and

in a fragmentary way. But the Bereans "searched the Scriptures *daily*." They gave unbroken attention to the question, like one who searches for hidden treasure, determined to know the truth respecting it. "*Therefore* many of them believed." Thus it is seen how faith comes. An honest purpose, a candid hearing, a diligent examination of the testimony, are the means of obtaining the faith which the gospel requires.

"For Isaiah says, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. . . . How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"\*

This is so plain "that none by comment can it plainer make." It settles the question as to the means of obtaining faith, and it reveals the source of the failure to believe on the part of so many. Faith is the result of attention, honest attention, earnest attention, persevering attention, to the truth. Men fill their minds and hearts with the cares and ambitions of life, crowding out the claims of divine truth, and remaining for half a life-time ignorant of the word of God; and with

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\* Rom. x. 16, 17, 14.

hearts thus preoccupied, minds thus beclouded, and the whole spiritual nature encrusted with the carnal influences of time and sense, they nevertheless expect an hour's attention to a sermon, or an occasional devotion of a few spare evenings to religious meetings, to secure to them the treasure of faith in Christ. As well expect to reap the healthful influences of sunlight by spending an hour one day in seven in the open air, and hiding away in a cave the rest of the week. It can not be. It is at war with common sense and with the word of God. The mind can only possess knowledge as it appropriates it by attention and careful study. The heart can only come under new influences as it withdraws from the old and opens itself to the new. Providence may break up the fallow-ground; experience may mellow the soul and make it receptive of the truth; but we can only receive the seed of the kingdom, which is the word of God, as we hear the word and understand it.\* We must be content to part with all we have, if we would secure "the pearl of great price."†

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\* Matt. xiii. 23.

† Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

Sometimes we are asked if the evidences of the truth of the Gospel are as clear and as strong as they might be. We answer, No. They might have been made entirely overwhelming. But they are clear and strong enough to reward honest search, and not so clear nor so strong but that the dishonest and the indifferent may neglect and reject them. They thus test the honesty and the earnestness of our hearts. None but the honest and earnest can become children of faith.

Reader, do you desire to obtain faith in Christ? Give heed to the word of God. Read and study the Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Withdraw your heart from other pursuits. Be earnest, as you would in examining a title to great estates, or in prosecuting a search for silver. Make it the great concern of your life. Think about it, talk about it, read and re-read, reflect on what you read, and bring home what you read to your own soul's needs; and you will not only believe, but when you believe you will be sure that your faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

## SERMON XII.

### REPENTANCE.

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every-where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—ACTS xvii. 30, 31.

IT is not the intention of the gospel to save men *in* their sins, but *from* their sins; and that not merely as it relates to the *guilt* of sin, but its *pollution* and *dominion* likewise. It may be well to repeat and emphasize a remark made in a former sermon—that the gospel is not an assertion of arbitrary authority, or a body of arbitrary enactments; but a system of means and agencies divinely adapted to a great end—the regeneration of our nature. It is meant “to bring us to God” in desire, will, and action, that we may be like Him and enjoy His fellowship. Repentance is commanded and the means to effect it are or-

dained, because without it we can not come to God.

The Greek word translated repentance, indicates *change*—conversion. It imports *change of mind or disposition*, and that, too, for the better. We have, indeed, more than one Greek word translated by this term repentance. One of them indicates a change, whether for better or worse. But that word which expresses the will of God concerning us, uniformly, in the New Testament, denotes a change for the better. We are sometimes asked, What is the difference between faith and repentance, since they are both expressive of change? We reply that the idea of change is not contained in the word *faith*, although it usually implies a change; it is rather expressive of rest, of trust, of simple confidence. But the word repentance is itself expressive of change. Faith respects that which is *true*; repentance that which is *right*. Faith looks away from falsehood and error to the truth; repentance looks away from sin to righteousness and holiness. It is “repentance from dead works to serve the living God.”\* There is,

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\* Heb. vi. 1; ix. 14.

perhaps, no better word than repentance to express the change indicated by the original term. Were it not that it has become limited in its meaning, with many, to a mere emotion of sorrow, it would be entirely unexceptionable. It does not mean sorrow, for Paul expressly affirms, that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of;" and says to the Corinthians: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance."\* Sorrow, therefore, precedes repentance. Neither does it mean *reformation*, in the popular acceptation of that word; for that refers to external acts, and is rather what the Scriptures mean by "bringing forth fruits meet for repentance." Paul tells us that he taught that men "should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."† We have, then, this order: 1. Sorrow; 2. Repentance; 3. Turning to God; 4. Doing works meet for repentance. A man may sorrow who never repents. So may a man reform from vicious ways who has never repented—circumstances may lead to a change of conduct where there has been no sor-

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\* 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.      † Acts xxvi. 20.

row for sin and no turning to God. But when we speak of the whole process of change by which we are turned from the power of Satan unto God, it stands thus: When we are led to believe on the Lord Jesus and accept his teachings, we come to see sin and righteousness in the light of these teachings until the former becomes odious and hateful to us. This leads to contrition or godly sorrow in view of our past sinfulness. This, in turn, leads to repentance, or a change of mind or purpose as to the life we shall live. This leads us to turn to God in obedience to the gospel, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Repentance, then, springs from sorrow for sin, and ultimates in obedience to God. It is ceasing to sin, and yielding up the life in a holy purpose to walk in the ways of God.

Let us look at two instances of repentance furnished to us in the Scriptures.

1. *The Ninevites.* Our Lord says, "They repented at the preaching of Jonah."\* The facts are briefly these: The inhabitants of Nineveh were exceedingly wicked. Jonah preached to

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\* Matt. xii. 41.

them at God's command. They believed what Jonah preached,\* and this wrought a change in all their convictions as to the life they were living. They clothed themselves in sackcloth, and fasted, and humbled themselves in the dust.† They turned every one from his evil way and from the violence that was in his hands.‡ It was therefore a sorrow for sin springing from their faith in God's message, and ripening into a purpose to break away from sin and obey God.

2. *The Prodigal Son.* In a far country, he was led by his bitter experience to reflect on his folly in wandering from his father's house, and his madness in wasting his substance. He sorrowed over his past course. He determined to change his course. He said: "I will arise, and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Here is sorrow, humility, and a purpose to live a new life. "And he arose and went to his father." Here this purpose is carried into execution. His sorrow ripened into determination, and his determination into

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\* Jon. iii. 5. † Jon. iii. 5, 6. ‡ Jon. iii. 8, 10.

action. This parable is presented by our Lord as an illustration of his sentiment, "There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repents." \*

It is scarcely possible to mistake what repentance means, in the light of these illustrations. We must come into such a conviction of the hatefulness of sin, that we can renounce it, forsake it, and come with broken heart to God to live a life of obedience. It is not the renunciation of this or that particular vice, but the renunciation of sin itself, in all its forms and grades and hues, and the withdrawal of heart and life from fellowship with it. This may involve, in many cases, much of bitter and desperate struggle to overcome bad habits, and break away from bad associations; but deeper down than bad habits, and back of all associations, is the renunciation of sin in the heart, in the deep and settled purpose to be the Lord's. It is a mighty thing to change the purpose of a life. It often involves much mental and spiritual conflict. But the change once thoroughly and deliberately made in the will, sustained by an en-

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\* Luke xv. 10.

lightened judgment and an approving conscience, and inspired by a faith that rests on God's eternal truth, the mere conquest of habits and denial of former associations is a comparatively easy matter. The real strife is in the sinner's own soul, between pride and humility; between self-sufficiency and reliance on Christ for salvation; between selfish and carnal pleadings and the demands of an awakened conscience; between the cunning sophistries of sin and the plain, stern, unbending utterances of truth and righteousness; between the voice of the syren that lures to destruction and the entreaties of mercy that would woo the soul to God. Gain the victory for truth and God in your own soul, until you can say, "It is done. Henceforth, I will leave my sins, and love God, and walk in righteousness." Then you will have "sorrowed to repentance." Then the way is prepared to turn to God.

We have not spoken in detail of these steps in the process with a view to lead the sinner to look for them to occur in distinct chronological succession in his own experience. What is logically separate and distinct, may, chronologically, exhibit no distinction. It is not needful to watch these

changes, or to attempt to repent logically and scientifically. The great thing is to get away from the love and dominion of sin, and come to God in heart and life—to break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by turning to the Lord—to bring to God the offering of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, that trembles at his word.

The motives to repentance are:

- (1.) The goodness of God.\*
- (2.) The tender and encouraging sympathy that heaven cherishes for the penitent.†
- (3.) The certainty of a righteous judgment in which the impenitent will be cast off forever from God.‡

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\* Rom. ii. 4. † Luke xv. 7, 10. ‡ Acts xvii. 31. Rom. ii. 5.

## SERMON XIII.

### CONFESSION.

“The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy 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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”—ROM. x. 8-10.

CONFESSION and baptism are so intimately associated in the Scriptures, that they ought to be treated together. But as we desire to make these matters as plain as possible, we prefer to treat of confession in a separate sermon, merely calling attention to the fact that in apostolic usage there is so close a connection of the two, that whenever confession is spoken of, it always implies baptism, and whenever baptism is spoken of, it always implies confession.

While religion is, in the first instance, a strictly personal thing—a matter between the soul and its Redeemer—and the obligation to submit to

Christ would be binding on one if he were the only sinner in the world, or if all but himself rejected it; it is yet true that it is not meant to confine its influence to the individual soul. No one is at liberty to confine the fact of his faith within himself; neither can he choose his own way of making it known to others. What he believes with the heart he must confess with the mouth. If no reason could be suggested for this, it would still be obligatory, for it is expressly enjoined as a part of that "word of faith" which the apostles preached. The text is clear, positive, and unmistakable. But there are good reasons why a confession of faith should be required.

1. It is due to our Lord and Saviour that we should confess him before men. He is our best friend. He is seeking our highest good. He accepted a very sorrowful and suffering lot that he might save us. In accomplishing this most philanthropic work he has met and still meets with contradiction, denial, and bitter opposition. The powers of darkness are leagued against him, with wicked men who hate his name and his doctrine. A fierce controversy rages over the question of his claims to divinity and sovereignty. His name is

blasphemed, his claims are denied, his teaching is opposed, his church is persecuted. It is a controversy involving all the dearest interests of our nature. Neutrality in such a strife is impossible ; and if it were possible, would be most dishonorable. We owe it to Him, therefore, when convinced of his Messiahship, to avow it openly, and place ourselves on the side of his advocates, that whatever influence we possess may tell certainly and directly in his behalf. "He that is not for me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

2. It is due to the church of Christ. The church needs, and has a right to demand, the co-operation of every soul that accepts the teachings she has in trust. In entering into any association, it is right that we should give in our adhesion to that which is characteristic of the association, and especially to that which is essential to its life. Every society is supposed to be based on some principle which is vital to its character and aims, and it requires no argument to show the propriety and necessity of conditioning membership on a frank and hearty avowal of such principle, and of a purpose to live and labor in

harmony with it. Now that which is vital to the church of Christ is, the divinity of its Founder, and his sovereignty as the Christ of God. On this the church is built.\* Out of this grows every obligation of her membership, every duty, every hope, every motive to Christian life. No one has a right to membership in this brotherhood who does not accept the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God, and his Messiahship as anointed of God to redeem and govern us. No one who does believe this can rightfully refuse or neglect to take a place in the church of Christ.

3. It is due to an unbelieving and perishing world. Whatever there is in the faith of Christ that is precious to us, has the same intrinsic value for all others who need salvation. It is the least we can do to give freely to others what we have freely received. It is treason against human nature to withhold that from the world which we are convinced is essential to its honor and happiness. Indeed, we are false to the noblest impulses of our own souls in withholding it, for it is among the first and most powerful desires of a soul that

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\* See Matt. xvi. 13-20; 1 Cor. iii. 11.

learns to believe in the Christ, that all others should be delivered from the snares out of which it has escaped, and share with it the precious treasures of the grace of God.

Now will I tell to sinners round  
What a dear Saviour I have found;  
I'll point to his redeeming blood,  
And say, "Behold the way to God."

4. It is especially due to one's self, for the deliverance of his own soul from thrall and danger. We are not safe until we have committed ourselves openly, unreservedly, and irrevocably to Christ and his cause. The influences of sin are very subtle, and at times its assaults are powerful and almost overwhelming. There are crises in life when, if not committed openly to truth and righteousness, so that we can not honorably yield, that very fact will decide the conflict, and decide it the wrong way. We need to surround ourselves with such influences as shall compel us to hold on to the truth against all odds. We need to know that heaven and earth are looking on, and that there is no retreat possible—not even a momentary retreat—from the post of honor and of danger.

In every point of view, therefore, it is wise to

require of the believer a public confession of his faith in Christ.

Let us now point out that the confession required is simply a confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. We are not required to avow faith in the church, faith in human leaders, faith in human creeds, or faith in our own religious experience. We look away from all else to Jesus the Author and Finisher of the faith. Acts viii, 36, 37, gives us the simple and beautiful confession of faith which was made in primitive times. We are aware that the genuineness of this text is held in doubt by many critics, and we would not press it beyond its just claims to confidence; but it only expresses in the most definite form what is implied or expressed throughout the New Testament.\*

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\* See John xx. 30, 31; Matt. xvi. 16-18; 1 Tim. vi. 12-14; Matt. x. 32, 33.

## SERMON XIV.

### BAPTISM.

“ And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”—MATT. xxviii. 18-20.

THE changes from the common version which we have introduced into the text, are now generally admitted to be necessary. The *teaching* of verse 19, in the common version, is not the *teaching* of verse 20. It is another word and has a different meaning. It imports *to make disciples*—to persuade ignorant and sinful men to leave their sins and come into the school of Christ, where they may be taught all things that relate to a new life and destiny. This discipling was done by *preaching*, rather than *teaching*. Hence, in Mark,\* in place of “make disciples of all nations,”

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† Mark xvi. 15.

we have "Go into all the world, and *preach the gospel to every creature*"—the latter text expressing the *means*, the former the *result*. The order in which the duties of the commission stand, taking Matthew and Mark together, is: 1. Preach the gospel, that men, believing it, may be persuaded to put themselves under the guidance of Jesus, the Christ. 2. Baptize those who believe, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. 3. Teach those who have thus entered the school of Christ, all that pertains to Christian life.

*Into* the name, and not *in* the name, is now almost universally admitted to be the proper rendering of *eis* in this text.

We propose to treat of baptism in the light of Scripture teaching. We are writing for the masses, and desire to guide them to safe conclusions with as little learned talk and criticism as possible.

1. Baptism, in the text, rests on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me. *Therefore* go ye, make disciples, baptizing them," etc. It is not a human device, a church expedient, or a mere mode

of obeying a divine command ; but is itself a divine ordinance. Not our pleasure, therefore, nor our views of propriety, nor our tastes, are to be consulted ; but the divine will. Whatever baptism is, as enjoined by our Lord, that we are to accept.

2. It is obligatory on all who would come under the authority of the Lord Jesus. It was not ordained for a particular people or age, but for all time, and for all who would become the disciples of Christ.

3. It is *initiatory*. It is designed to bring its subjects into new relations to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and, of course, into new relations to the whole spiritual universe. This is evidently the force of *into* in the text. Baptism must, therefore, be an act of faith. Its subject must be a believer—since no mere physical act can accomplish a spiritual change. If the baptism of an infant can bring it into new spiritual relationship to God, without will, desire, or consciousness, on its own part, there must be a miracle wrought in baptism—which is what the adherents of baptismal regeneration affirm. This, however, is destitute of Scriptural proof. But where the subject of bap-

tism is a believer in Christ, purposing in his heart to abandon sin and lead a holy life, and his baptism expresses that faith and purpose, there can fitly be associated with it a change of relationship. It is the institution in obedience to which he passes out of the world into the church—out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Hence baptism—that is believer's baptism—is spoken of by our Lord himself as *a birth*—birth being but a change of state to a living being, in which it passes into new conditions of life and development. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God."\*

As an act of initiation, baptism has peculiar significance. It is once for all. All the coming life is in it, in desire and in purpose. It ought, therefore, to be an act of intelligence, of deliberation, and of cheerful and solemn voluntariness. We can not go back of it without dishonor. All that it expresses, in profession, we are to seek all life-long to fulfill. It is a solemn separation from an old to a new life, and an acceptance of obliga-

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\* John iii. 5.

tions which can never be fully discharged until death releases us from probation. To a believer, it will be seen at a glance, it may have all this significance; to the unbeliever, or the infant incapable of belief, it can have no such import.

Rites of initiation are generally symbolical. They are meant to symbolize the prominent features of the life to which they introduce us. We may expect to find this true in respect to this ordinance; but if true, our present text does not indicate it.

4. It is *saving*. This is implied in the initiation into new spiritual relations to the Godhead. It is plainly expressed in the parallel passage in Mark: "He that believeth and is baptized *shall be saved*." What this salvation is, may be gathered from the corresponding text in Luke:\* "Repentance and *remission of sins* shall be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It is salvation from sin. He who believes in Jesus, repents of his sins, and is baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is saved alike from the love, the guilt, and

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\* Luke xxiv. 47.

the dominion of sin—is dead to sin and alive to God. He is not yet saved from the power of death. His salvation from the grave and his entrance on eternal life, depend on his faithful continuance to the end of life in well-doing.\* Thus he attains to glory, honor, and immortality.

We pass to another text:

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”†

“Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls.”‡

1. Here baptism is joined with repentance, as in Mark it was joined with faith—showing that in making disciples, the object in preaching the gospel was to lead men to believe and repent, that they might thus be prepared for initiation into the school of Christ.

2. Baptism is not only administered *into* the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but also *in* or *upon* the name of Jesus Christ; as

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\* Rom. ii. 7; 2 Pet. i. 5-11.

† Acts ii. 38.

‡ Acts ii. 41.

he is Lord of all, and it is by his authority we are baptized.

3. Baptism is "for the remission of sins." This agrees to "shall be saved" in Mark xvi. 16. Various desperate attempts have been made to break the force of this language. But it is to be observed:

(1.) The concurrent testimony of criticism, of all ages and all parties, with few exceptions, is in favor of the ordinary meaning of the words employed.

(2.) The opposition to this interpretation is marked by so much contradiction, and its various forms have been so ephemeral in character, as to destroy its force.

(3.) The text is a reply to a question; "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" That is, as all agree, What shall we do *to be saved*? They were convicted of sin. They were yet unpardoned. Their question is an appeal for mercy. The answer tells them what to do *to be saved*. It tells them two things to be done: (1) Repent; (2) Be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ. If the phrase "for the remission of sins" were left out entirely, the meaning is not altered. Clearly,

then, they had no assurance of the remission of sins until, repenting, they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

4. Baptism was obligatory on *all*. "Be baptized, *every one of you*." There was no escape from this.

5. "They that gladly received the word were baptized"—only they. Infants could not gladly receive the word ; infants could not repent ; therefore infants were not baptized.

6. Repentance and remission of sins shall be preached, in his name, *among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem." Then we have here the inspired and divinely authorized method of preaching repentance and remission of sins, and can learn here just how *we* are to come into the enjoyment of forgiveness.

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." \*

This relates to Samaritans—a people with whom the Jews had no dealings ; but the love of Christ

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\* Acts viii. 12.

annihilates old prejudices and selfish passions, and the Samaritans come into the kingdom on the same terms as the Jews. There is no change in the terms to meet their prejudices or to justify Jewish exclusiveness.

1. Only those who believed were baptized.

2. The limitation "both men and women" is worthy of note. Had infants been baptized, this language could not have been used with propriety. See Matt. xiv. 21: "And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, *beside women and children.*"

3. From verse 16 we learn that they were baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus." This shows that it was the same baptism to which the Jews submitted—the baptism authorized in the commission given to the apostles.

"And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And they went down both into the water, both Philip and

the eunuch ; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more ; and he went on his way rejoicing." \*

This is a deeply interesting narrative, and throws new light on the subject of inquiry. We have not, up to this time, received a hint as to what the particular act called baptism is. We begin to learn something about it here. But let us attend to the facts in their order.

1. Philip "preached Jesus" to the Ethiopian—nothing but Jesus ; and from the scope of his text in Isa. liii. we may well conclude that the sorrows and toils of the suffering Son of God, his death for our trasgressions, his resurrection from the dead, and his power to save from sin and death, entered into the discourse.

2. The application for baptism was voluntary on the part of his auditor. Therefore, in preaching Jesus to him, Philip must have told him about baptism, or he would have known nothing about it. We can not, then, preach Jesus, according to prim-

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\* Acts viii. 36-40.

itive usage, without telling about baptism. We can not reach Christ's promise "shall be saved," without baptism. If baptism is "for remission of sins" in the name of Jesus Christ, we can not fully make known the salvation of Christ without making this known.

3. Conversion reaches the heart. "If thou believest *with all thine heart*, thou mayest be baptized." This confirms what has been already noted, that baptism is not a mere external act, but an act of faith—an act springing from a heart subdued to Christ. It could not otherwise introduce us into spiritual relations.

4. The faith that saves is here expressed. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." It is not faith in a set of doctrines, but faith in a personal Saviour—a divine Redeemer, able to save from sin and death.

5. His baptism was immediate. There was no delay after his faith was confessed. No "Christian experience" was required; no subscription to human Articles of Faith. No church was required to vote on his fitness for baptism. No inquiry was made into his former belief, or his orthodoxy

or heterodoxy as to prevalent theological opinions. His voluntary avowal of faith in the Son of God was all-sufficient. If right here, all wrongs would soon be righted. Christ in the heart, the center of trust, and love, and hope, expels all that is false and attracts all that is true.

6. Baptism was in water. They went both down into the water. They came both up out of the water. In the water the baptism took place. Philip performed it. The Ethiopian received it. This is an advance on the knowledge gained from former texts. In baptism the subject yields himself into the hands of an administrator, and the obedience is rendered in the water.

7. The baptized believer "went on his way rejoicing." Well he might. He had found the all-sufficient Saviour, in whom every want of his soul was met. He had accepted his salvation "with all his heart." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He did believe; he was baptized; the promise "shall be saved," was now *his* by personal appropriation; his sins were pardoned; the Holy Spirit was sent forth into his heart, crying Abba, Father; he went on his way possessing the

pearl of great price, and rejoicing as one that findeth great spoil.

We must devote another sermon to the remaining texts on baptism.

## SERMON XV.

### BAPTISM.

WE continue our examination of Scripture teaching on this subject :

“And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made ; and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us ; whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there.” \*

But little needs to be said here in the way of comment.

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\* Acts xvi. 13-15.

1. Lydia was a worshiper of God, and her household were evidently trained in the knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures.

2. The discourse of Paul and his associates resulted in convincing them of the truth concerning the Christ.

3. They were immediately baptized.

From the fact that a "household" is mentioned here, an inference is drawn that there must have been infants baptized in this instance. But this does not necessarily follow. In I Cor. i. 16, mention is made that Paul baptized "the household of Stephanas." In the last chapter of the same epistle (verse 15) this same household is spoken of as having "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Now one of two things is true. Either (1) all the members of this household were old enough to engage in this ministry, and therefore capable of believing; or (2) if any were too young for this ministry, they are not taken into the account, and the household addicting themselves to the ministry of the saints, means all the members of the household capable of such ministry. To argue that because a household is mentioned, *therefore* infants ministered to the saints,

will be seen at once to be absurd ; yet it is not a whit more absurd than the argument that infants were baptized because households were baptized. In the latter case as in the former, either the whole household were believers, or the term is used only in reference to such as were capable of believing. Let this suffice in regard to the matter of household baptisms.

In this instance, however, the inference is especially feeble ; for,

(1.) It is not known that Lydia was married.

(2.) If married, there is no evidence that she was the mother of children.

(3.) If the mother of children, it remains to be proved that any of them were so young as to be incapable of believing.

(4.) If any such belonged to her, it is not in evidence that they were with her. She was absent from home. She was traveling on business. Her household would properly consist of such as she had employed to assist her in the sale of her merchandise.

“ And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their

stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house." \*

This is the case of the Philippian jailer and his household.

1. Paul and Silas preached to them the word of the Lord.

2. They all believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. They were all baptized.

Attempts have been made to show that they could not have been immersed ; but this is mere inference, and very unsatisfactory inference too. For

(1.) The prisoners were brought out of the prison before the preaching, and addressed the family in the house (ver. 29-32).

(2.) He again brought them into his house after the baptism (ver. 34).

They therefore went out to be baptized ; no difference whether to a tank in the prison inclosure or to the river. Whatever baptism means, it was fulfilled in their case. If it was immersion,

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\* Acts xvi. 32-34.

they could have gone to the river Gangas, if necessary ; or conveniences for it may have been found in the bathing-place within the prison walls.

“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house ; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.” \*

1. Here is another instance of a household of believers.

2. The order observed in this, as in all the cases recorded, is that of the commission given to the apostles. 1. The Gospel is preached. 2. Hearing results in faith. 3. The believers are all baptized.

“And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” †

This is the language of Ananias to Saul of Tarsus. It is not necessary, after what was said in a former sermon on Saul's conversion, to go again into details. We simply group the facts presented in the different narratives.

1. Saul was led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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\* Acts xviii. 8.

2. He was brought to repentance, so that he instantly abandoned his course of life, and became at once submissive to the will of Jesus.

3. He remained three days and nights in an anxious and repentant state of mind, neither eating nor drinking, but crying to God, evidently confessing his sins and craving to know the way of life.

4. Ananias came to him, restored his sight, and instructed him what to do, in the language of the text we have quoted.

5. He immediately arose and was baptized.

When we read Paul's teaching of justification by faith, as in the epistle to the Romans, or in Phil. iii : 7-9, we may be assured that he does not treat of faith apart from that acceptance of Christ in baptism to which faith leads; for it was in baptism that his own faith laid hold of Christ, and that he rejoiced in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins.

"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."\*

"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." †

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." ‡

We have already learned that baptism was performed in water; that persons to be baptized went down into the water, and that another baptized them. We now learn,

1. That in baptism there is a burial and a resurrection; a burial in water and a resurrection out of it.

2. That this was an act of faith—so that not only the body, but the entire person, was buried and rose again.

3. That this baptism identified its subjects with

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\* Rom. vi. 3, 4.

† Col. ii. 12, 13.

‡ Col. iii. 1.

Christ—with his death and resurrection, and enabled them to appropriate the blessings of that death and resurrection.

4. That this baptism was the transition from a life of sin to a life of righteousness ; so that now dead to sin, alive to God, their sins forgiven, and Christ accepted in all the fullness of his redeeming power and Christly authority, its subjects were “new creatures in Christ Jesus,” and “walked in newness of life.”

We quote just one more text, and then we shall have a fair exhibit of the teachings of the New Testament on this question :

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer [*eperoteema*, asking, inquiry] of a

good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” \*

There are some critical difficulties in the text with which we do not trouble our readers, because we are writing for those who have little ability to comprehend such criticism except in its results. We prefer to make such a statement of the teaching of the text as will not be seriously affected by the criticisms to which we allude.

1. Noah and his family were saved through water—not through water *alone*, but through water as one of the means or agencies employed for their deliverance; not through *baptism*, but simply through *water*.

2. An antitype to this water Peter finds in *baptism*; and an antitype to their salvation, in the salvation now effected by baptism.

3. This antitypical salvation he describes both negatively and positively. (1.) The baptism which saves is not like the Jewish baptisms, which merely effected a legal and fleshly purification; “not putting away the filth of the flesh”—legal uncleanness.† (2.) It is the answer of a good conscience

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\* I Pet. iii. 18-21.

† See Num. xiv

toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This salvation related to the *conscience*. We do not enter on the critical question concerning *epe-roteema*, whether it ought to be translated asking, inquiry, answer, seeking, or what not. Whether it is the seeking, the obtaining, or the answer of a good conscience, one thing is evident—baptism relates to the conscience; and *salvation is not complete without baptism*, else it could not be said, “baptism saves us.”

Concerning the type, several things are clear.

(1.) The water saved only those who were believing and obedient to God.

(2.) The water separated between these believers and the unbelieving world.

(3.) The water effected for these believers a transition from one world to another, and brought them into a new covenant with God.

So baptism saves only believers in Christ; it is the line of separation between them and unbelievers; it carries them over from the old world, and the old life of sin, into a new covenant relationship with God, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and their death, burial, and resurrection with him.

We have not troubled our readers much with the judgment of commentators, but on this somewhat difficult text we take pleasure in quoting from the notes of Fronmüller, in Lange's Commentary :

“The end contemplated is not, as in the case of Jewish lustrations, purification from the filth of the body. . . The antithesis of the putting away of the filth of the flesh suggests a reference to the moral import of baptism ; to inward, spiritual cleansing. Hence the apostle names this *agathē suneidesis* as the end contemplated in baptism. With this we have to connect the apposition *eis Theon*, for a good conscience toward God, which is much more than a good conscience toward men (I. Cor. iv. 4), is just what we need. . . As to the matter itself, the good conscience can not be supposed to be existing at baptism, and preceding it, for the apostle elsewhere regards a good conscience as something received at, and effected by, baptism (Acts ii. 38). If the good conscience were anterior to baptism, it would be difficult to see how salvation, by means of baptism, could be necessary. What, then, is the meaning of *eperotēma*, which occurs only once, and that in this

passage, in the New Testament? We should expect a word signifying the cleansing of the conscience: but *eperoteema* is never used in such a sense; nor does it signify promise, or pledge, as Grotius explains the word from the usage of Roman law, nor address, confidence, open approach; but simply asking, inquiry. This gives quite a good sense; baptism is the inquiry for a good conscience before God, the desire and longing for it. Lutz approaches the right explanation: ‘Baptism is the request for a good conscience, for admittance to the state of reconciliation on the part of such as have a good conscience toward God; a petition for the pardon of sin, which is obtained by the merits of Christ.’”

Waterland, on Justification, page 440, says:

“St. Peter assures us that baptism saves; that is, it gives a just *title* to salvation, which is the same as to say that it conveys *justification*. But then it must be understood, not of the *outward washing*, but of the *inward, lively faith stipulated* in it and by it. Baptism concurs with faith, and faith with baptism, and the Holy Spirit with both; and so the merits of Christ are savingly applied. Faith *alone* will not ordinarily serve in this case;

but it must be a *contracting* faith on *man's part*, contracting in form corresponding to the federal promises and engagements on *God's part*."

Rev. John Lillie, D. D., late pastor of the Presbyterian church at Kingston, New York, in his admirable Lectures on the Epistles of Peter, says on this text :

"But what, you will ask, is baptism, then, a saving ordinance? Certainly; that is just what Christ's apostle here affirms. Nor is this the only place by any means in which the New Testament speaks of baptism in a way that would now offend many good people, were it not that the perplexing phraseology is unquestionably Scriptural."\*

A careful examination and comparison of the Scriptures we have presented will lead our readers, we trust, to certain and safe conclusions as to what baptism is, who are proper subjects of it, and what is its design.

May they all determine to walk in the light of truth, that their faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

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\* Lectures on the First and Second Epistles of Peter, pp. 252, 253. C. Scribner & Co., 1869.

## SERMON XVI.

### A NEW CREATURE.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—2 COR. v. 17.

NOW that we have carefully considered and answered the two questions: (1.) What has God done to save sinners? (2.) What are sinners required to do to be saved? it may be well to pause and inquire, What changes are wrought in, or in behalf of, him who accepts this salvation? The text describes him as “a new creature.” This language is expressive of a very thorough change. Literally, indeed, it imports not change, but an absolutely new being. But the language must not be made to do this service. The entire teaching of the Scriptures represents, not the creation of a new being, but the salvation of one who was lost; the reconciliation of one who was an enemy; the justification of a con-

demned sinner. It is the same being who sinned that is now justified, the same being that was lost who is now saved. He has the same faculties, the same powers, the same individuality. The language, therefore, can mean no more than that the change is so great and wonderful as to appear like a new creation—a style of speech not unknown to the Jews in describing the proselytes made from heathenism. The new creature is not the creation of something out of nothing, but rather a new creation in the sense belonging to the phrase when we speak of the life, and bloom, and music of the glad spring-time as a new creation. Contrasted with the nakedness and desolation of winter, the life of spring is as beautiful and glorious as if it had just sprung from the creative hand. But the earth has only come into a new position to the sun, whose directer rays beam on it and penetrate its bosom with life-giving influences; and the germs of life hidden in the earth, which sought development in vain before, now touched with the vivifying power, which could not then gain access, unfold their hidden treasures and burst into gay and vigorous development. But it is the same earth that we called

dead and desolate last winter. So the soul of man is brought under the direct beams of the Sun of Righteousness. In its alienation it held such a position God-ward that the beams of truth fell not on it, or fell so obliquely as not to penetrate. Now the light and heat of the Gospel fall directly on it, and touch with vivifying power the latent energies of the soul and the seeds of truth that have been deposited there; and the same nature that was frost-bound and fruitless, and as it were dead, breaks out in a new life of faith and repentance and obedience, and is gay with buds and blossoms, promising a rich fruitage of holiness. As we stand, to-day,\* amid the glorious outburst of beauty and of song in forest and field and garden, and listen on the hill-side to the music of the gently flowing river at its base, and see mountain and valley and stream bathed in the grateful light of heaven, and answering back its messages of love with a teeming life that struggles heavenward—we say, viewing the contrast with frozen river and naked trees, and barren hill-sides and howling winds of a few months ago, “old things are passed

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\* Written in May.

away ; behold, all things are become new." The language is not literally correct, but it is, in its understood sense, true and forcible.

We must make another remark to guard against misapprehension. The language of our text, and that of many parallel passages, describes a change which took place in the case of the mass of converts in apostolic times, who were lifted suddenly out of the extreme degradation of heathenism, or the scarcely less fearful moral degradation of Judaism. The world was, morally, in a terrible abyss. "Dead in trespasses and sins" was none too forcible language to express it. "Out of the depths" they came, sometimes in a day or an hour—as soon as they heard the Gospel—driven by their sense of utter wretchedness and lured by the divine sweetness and richness of the mercy offered in the Gospel. It was a change "out of darkness into marvelous light ;" out of death into life ; and it required strong language to express it.

No doubt it is about as great a change to many now ; but to multitudes it is not. Reared from infancy under gospel influences, breathing in a spiritual atmosphere, shielded from debasing and corrupting vices, and filled with a knowledge of

divine things, it is impossible they can be the subjects of so sudden or so marked a change. When they decide to become Christians, they are already within a step or two of perfecting the decision. They are brought to the same decision with those in apostolic times—that of entire submission to the will of God ; but they have been brought to it in the gradual process of education, and without an experimental knowledge of the vileness and degradation into which others have descended. Conversion, speaking experimentally, will vary with the various influences and conditions under which we have been reared, and in which the gospel finds us. It finds some much further away from God than others. In reaching the same landing place, the former have farther to come than the latter, and will tell, experimentally, a different story. No human experience can, therefore, be a correct standard for all.

But we propose to consider the changes accomplished in the sinner who becomes a Christian. We are not now to encumber our investigations with the merely circumstantial differences of different conversions. The changes we are about to describe may be gradually wrought through the

years of childhood and youth with some, they may be more suddenly and powerfully wrought in others under different circumstances ; but between the point where the gospel first finds us and that in which we are recognized as "new creatures," it must be wrought in all.

The phrase "in Christ" describes the fullness of this change. Christ in us, and we in Christ, is the whole story. But this is too vague. We must come more into detail, to meet the wants of inquirers.

1. There is *a change of mind*—perhaps we had better say a change of ideas and principles. Just as we learn to believe in Christ and fix our attention on Him, faith transfers his thoughts and reasonings into our minds. We come to think as he thinks—to see with his eyes and to judge with his judgment, about sin and righteousness, heaven and hell, time and eternity, man and God. He revolutionizes our conceptions of all these things. Sin comes to be ugly and odious, and righteousness takes on a heavenly beauty and dignity. The things of time, that were once *all* to us, lose their magnitude and dwindle into insignificance ; and the things of eternity loom up in a grandeur and awfulness and

*reality* that did not belong to them before Christ was our teacher. God, who was only a terror to us, is now bending over us with a Father's love, waiting with open arms to receive the prodigal back to the home he forsook. The holiness and justice of God are not less, but more, than they used to be; but his compassion and mercy, as now seen, smite the conscience with the greater power that such justice and holiness, and compassion and mercy, have been so long despised or neglected. A change at the soul's center concerning Christ, changes every hue and aspect of every moral and spiritual question in the entire circumference of human intelligence; so that faith in Christ—the implicit acceptance of Christ as our Lord and Saviour—is a revolution in our conceptions and estimates of all spiritual realities. God is good, compassionate, and loving; man is sinful, guilty, and helpless; sin is abominable; holiness is beautiful; the world, with its pomps and pleasures, is an empty shadow; heaven is real, and eternal life all that is worth living for. This life, with its noblest interests, has dignity and value only as it relates to the life that is eternal. We become new in our ideas and principles; the old standards and the

old estimates of life and its aims, and the old rules and maxims of life, are all rejected ; and with our spiritual vision rectified, we see all things in the light of Christ's teachings. "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

2. There is a *change of heart*. The feelings and affections run in new channels and flow in new directions. We love God, love his people, love all that is good and noble and pure, love even our enemies. We hate sin. We hate the pride that so long blinded us, and the selfishness that so long perverted all our aims. We love the Bible. We love to pray. We love to meditate and talk of spiritual things. We love the practice of righteousness. The life of holiness, which once seemed so distasteful and burdensome, is now beautiful to think upon, and its heaviest crosses seem light and easy. The associations that once charmed us—the frivolities and gayeties and carnal excitements of the world—have lost their attractiveness, and instead seem repulsive, and sometimes even hideous. Life has new meaning to us. The brightness of the new love in our hearts lends a new luster to every thing that is good ; the love of God in Christ makes the spirit so joyous, that we are insensible

to much that formerly annoyed and oppressed us ; and the hope of heaven puts a new interpretation alike on the joys and sorrows of our lot. In respect to the heart, as well as the mind, "old things are passed way, behold all things are become new." Christ in the heart creates a new world for us.

We ought to say here that the phrase "Be converted," in the common version of the Scriptures, is an improper rendering. It is the active voice, and should be rendered actively, *turn*. "Repent and turn, that your sins may be blotted out, and that seasons of refreshment may come from the presence of the Lord."\* This gives us the clearest idea of what is accomplished in regeneration ; it is the *turning of the sinner to God*—his turning from falsehood to truth, from sin to righteousness, from the love and practice of

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\* There is no longer a doubt as to the incorrectness of the rendering in our common version. Two things sinners were required to do : 1. Repent ; 2. Turn to God. Three things were promised to result from this repentance and turning : 1. Their sins should be blotted out ; 2. Seasons of refreshment should come from the presence of the Lord ; 3. Jesus Christ should be sent to them for their final redemption. See A. Clarke, Bengel, Alford, Lange, on this text.

evil to the love and practice of good, from false trusts and guides to a true trust in Him who is the Way the Truth, the Life. Consider that it is the same being who was going wrong who is *turned* to the right; the same mind that was thinking evil that is *turned* to think that which is true and good; the same heart that was loving sin that is *turned* to love that which is good and holy. It is a perverted nature restored to integrity, through the truth and mercy of God, revealed in Christ, apprehended by faith, and appropriated by obedience to the gospel.

We are not yet done with the changes wrought in the sinner in bringing him to God. But we must pause here and let the reader consider what has been submitted.

## SERMON XVII.

### A NEW CREATURE.

A THIRD change to be noted in forming a new creature in Christ Jesus, is the *new relationship* into which the believer is introduced. Consider attentively the following passages, and especially the force of the preposition *into*, as marking a transition from one set of relations to another entirely different.

“Baptizing them *into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” \*

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter *into* the kingdom of God.” †

“Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized *into* Jesus Christ were baptized *into* his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism *into* death.” ‡

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\* Matt. xxviii. 19.

† John iii. 5.

‡ Rom. vi. 3, 4.  
(169)

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God.” \*

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus ; for as many of you as have been baptized *into* Christ, have put on Christ” †

“Remember . . . that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. . . . Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” ‡

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us *into* the kingdom of his dear Son.” §

These texts are sufficient to establish the truth that, in addition to the change of mind and heart previously spoken of, there is an evident and sen-

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\* Rom. vii. 4. † Gal. iii. 26, 27. ‡ Eph. ii. 11-19. § Col. i. 13.

sible transition into new relations to the spiritual universe. A change of relationship is a change affecting the whole being. It is not simply the mind or the heart passing into a new state, but *the person*—the entire being. The body, therefore, as well as the spirit is subject to this change. It is effected, therefore, not by a mere mental act, or an emotion of the heart, but by an act of faith, in which the body, as well as the mind, shares; in which, by a formal and overt proceeding, the soul weds itself to the object of its trust and love, and with which it may forever associate the acceptance of the salvation of God. That baptism is that act of faith in which the believer enters into these new relationships, needs no further proof than the plain and unequivocal declarations of Scripture already quoted. This ordinance has peculiar significance as marking the formal and complete separation of its subject from the life of sin and alienation, and his complete entrance into the covenant of peace and grace. It is the marriage ceremony—the act of naturalization—the adopting act. He who scripturally submits to it is married to Christ—becomes a citizen of the kingdom of heaven—is owned a child of God.

There are no degrees in a change of state. It is instantaneous. The change of mind may be gradual; the change of heart also; but the change of state is accomplished at once. We are either in Christ or out of Christ; either aliens or citizens; either strangers or children; and baptism is the dividing line between these states. On one side of it we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; on the other we are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

It is impossible to describe in words the transcendent honor and dignity that belongs to a child of God. The beloved apostle, in contemplating this subject, breaks out in a transport of admiration: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." \* It is not possible to conceive of a rank more exalted. No wonder that our Lord, though recognizing in John the Baptist the greatest among men in point of *official* power, should say, "Nevertheless the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he;" for a mere official rank is as nothing compared with the spiritual

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\* I John iii. 1.

rank to which the grace of God elevates the converted sinner. Not among all the ranks of angels, cherubs, and seraphs, is there any thing to compare with this. "To which of the angels saith he at any time, Thou art my son?" "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation?"\* Yet what he says of his Son he says also of the ransomed sinner—"for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one [Father], for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."†

"If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."‡ Partners of Jesus, we share his cross, and will also share his crown. He is identified with us in the sorrows and burdens and dishonors of our earthly lot, and identifies us with himself in the triumphs, dignities, and glories of his reign—so that because he lives, we shall live also; and to him that overcometh will he give to sit down with him on his throne, even as he overcame and is seated with the Father on his throne.

How ineffably great and glorious, then, is our rank as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty!

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\* Heb. i. 5, 14.

† Heb. ii. 11.

‡ Rom. viii. 17.

How adorable the grace that rescues us from death and exalts us to a place in the household of God! Surely, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

4. *A changed character.* The result of the aforementioned changes is a change of character. "Now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."\* "Formerly ye were darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord: walk as children of the light."† A changed character is the legitimate result of the changes we have mentioned. It is not the intention of these papers to enter into the details of Christian life. That may be done in another series. Our present object is to lead sinners to Christ. We will only say, therefore, on this head, that where Christ has become the object of trust and love, the life must and will be modeled on his life. Beholding him, adoring him, appropriating his counsels, drinking into his Spirit, we shall be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit

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\* Rom. vi. 22.

† Eph. v. 8.

of the Lord.”\* Hence, says Paul, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in him—rooted in him, and built upon him, and established in the faith wherein ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”†

This involves, also, a change in our enjoyments. Because we are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. Our delight is in God—his word, his will, his ways, his works, his people. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”‡ “Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

5. The final change is that of *destiny*. We are delivered from death, and made heirs according to

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\* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

† Col. ii. 6, 7.

‡ Rom. v. 1-5.

the hope of eternal life. Not only is the spirit within us born of God, but our very bodies are to be born from the grave into the beauty and grandeur of immortality. "He will change our vile bodies, and fashion them like to his own glorious body, according to the power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." \* Then this glorified body, inhabited by a purified spirit, and shining like the sun, shall inherit new heavens and a new earth, and possess the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Sin, death, hell, all conquered—eternal security, eternal holiness, and eternal love shall be the portion of the sinner saved by grace.

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\* Phil. iii. 21.

## SERMON XVIII.

### EXHORTATION.

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”—ACTS ii. 40.

HAVING set before our readers the need of salvation, and pointed out its source in the grace of God, its revelation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, its confirmation by the Holy Spirit, and its conditions as announced by the apostles; we desire in conclusion, to address to such as have not accepted this salvation, a few words of exhortation.

To make this salvation yours, it must be personally accepted. The choice must be your own. No other one can believe for you, repent for you, or be baptized for you; nor will God interfere with your liberty by compelling you into reconciliation. It would not, indeed, be reconciliation without the voluntary yielding of your own heart to God. On

the divine side, the work is complete. The oxen and fatlings have been killed, the feast has been spread, and "all things are ready." It remains for you to come and partake freely. God has provided the feast, but he will not compel you to come and eat ; the feast is spread in vain for you, if you do not appropriate it by your own voluntary faith and obedience. Dismiss, I pray you, the thought that heaven is withholding the blessing of salvation from you, or that your acceptance of it depends on a special visitation from on high. God's providences and judgments may render some seasons more propitious than others for saving impressions on your heart, but there is no day or hour when you may not come, *if you will*, and partake of the water of life freely. Hence Jesus attributes the failure of the Jews to receive the blessing to their own stubborn will: "Ye would not."\* And the apostles could account in no other way for their failure to convert those to whom they preached the gospel, than that they "judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, and put it from them."† The reason that it is

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\* Matt. xxiii. 37.

† Acts xiii. 46.

sometimes day and sometimes night, is not that the sun ceases to shine, but that the earth turns away from its everlasting brightness.

“Earth, turning from the sun, brings night to man;  
Man, turning from his God, brings endless night.”

The reason that it is sometimes winter and sometimes summer, is not that the sun has withdrawn his beams, but that the earth has changed its position. The sun shines on forever—its light and heat never fail. But the earth turns away where the sunbeams can not strike. When the earth comes back again into a true position, it is greeted with the unfailing light and heat of the unchanging sun, and its frosty bosom is penetrated with life-giving power, and answers back in bud and blossom and golden fruitage. So the soul of man may be ice-bound and desolate under the wintry reign of sin, while the Love of God remains as rich and powerful as ever. Let the soul but “turn to God,” and it will be bathed in a light that never fails, and quickened with a power of grace that is as unchanging as God’s own nature. The earth can not help itself. It is passive in the hands of omnipotence to be turned hither and

thither at God's will. Not so with your spiritual nature. This is endowed with a self-sovereignty which its Creator ever respects and will not violate. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him and he with me."\* Yes, he stands at the door and knocks; but he will not force the door. *You* must open to him, or he will never come in. Will you shut out your God, and refuse him admittance to the heart he has created and desires to redeem? It is in your power to do it; but if you are wicked enough to venture on this reckless assertion of self-sovereignty, and choose a godless life, complain not if at last you find a godless destiny.

Your religious nature is your highest, noblest nature. You do yourself great injustice if you neglect its interests. The dignity of your being depends on the symmetry of your powers. Those which are earthly and relate to time, are not to be neglected. They have their value, and should not be slighted. But they are inferior, and should be held in subordination to the spiritual. They

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\* Rev. iii. 20.

should be servants, not masters. When they are lifted into supremacy, and the strength of life is given to the flesh or to mere intellect, human nature is robbed of its crown of glory, and the distance between the man and the brute is so diminished that it may well puzzle the wisest to decide wherein one excels the other in real advantage. A merely intellectual superiority is of little worth, if we must perish with the objects for which we live; and if we are to have a merely animal destiny, who can say that it is worth while to seek any thing higher than an animal life?

Admit a destiny after death, and this enslavement to time and sense is unspeakably foolish and absurd—because that future destiny must grow out of the life we have lived here. Neither Scripture nor sound philosophy teaches that heaven and hell are arbitrary appointments. By eternal and immutable laws we shall reap as we have sown. An impure nature is, from its own character and by its own proclivities, barred from a pure and happy heaven. The manhood of our being will be what its childhood and youth shall have made it. What madness, then, to linger among the toys and

sports of childhood, and shun the needful preparation for manhood's greatness and dignity! What supreme folly to attempt to fill the nature that never dies with the perishable treasures and pleasures of earth!

This leads us to say that it is a most unworthy notion of religion which regards it as simply meant to prepare us for dying—which invests it with magical power to transform a polluted sinner, in the agonies of death, into a pure and glorified saint. No, no; religion is *a life*. Its immediate object is to turn the heart to God and train the life in the ways of God. It is to place us in harmony with all that is true and good, that we may grow up into stateliness and fruitfulness, as “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.” It imparts a new meaning and a new value to all that makes up life. Duties, trials, pleasures, all receive a new significance in the light of the religion of Jesus. The sun is brighter, the flowers have a new beauty and fragrance, the song of the birds is sweeter far, home is dearer, friends are more precious to us, love is holier, toil is more cheerful, sorrows are lighter, our songs grow more jubilant, and our tears are

wiped away ; for the radiance of heaven is poured on all earthly things, and the eternity that has opened on us gives a new interpretation to all that enters into our present life. It is a great injustice to ourselves, therefore, to shut out from life that which alone can give it true significance, inspire it with a worthy aim, and reconcile us to its burdens and conflicts. Every day is worse than wasted that is not consecrated, in harmony with the religion of Jesus, to the true aim of life.

That the life to which the gospel calls us is one of struggle and conflict, we will not conceal from you. Let no one enter it with false expectations. It has no charms and no rewards for the slothful, the indifferent, or the time-serving. All along its rugged path, on the rough mountain-side up which it leads us, are heard trumpet-calls to battle, and the mighty Prince of Salvation, who leads on the hosts, is stern in his requirements of self-denial and unceasing vigilance and toil. He asks no followers that will not follow Him to death, bearing the cross for His sake. "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." If we follow, we follow in no

path of flowers—but rather of flints and thorns, and we shall often be footsore and weary, even as was the Man of Sorrows. But what of that? Think you to escape struggle and conflict, by shunning the leadership of Jesus? I tell you nay. We are in for the struggle, whether we follow Jesus or refuse to follow him. The difference is between struggling with and for him, and against him. In the one case, we struggle with God, and heaven, and an approving conscience on one side—"heart within and God o'erhead"—on the other, the frown of offended truth darkens our path, the thunders of a condemning conscience peal and crash through the chambers of the soul, and only the false and wicked of earth and hell stand by us! It is really more difficult and terrible to fight your way *down*, than to fight your way *up*. Ah! think not that a life of sin or unbelief is one of ease and pleasure. At the entrance there may be sunshine and flowers, songs and merriment; but look at the end thereof: it is death. Thunder and lightning and tempest are there—the blackness of despair and unnameable terrors—"a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation;" and even this is reached only through dis-

appointment, sorrow, and wretchedness. Fight we must; toil we must. Better fight under the banner of righteousness and win a victory that secures eternal peace and joy.

Does it seem too serious a work to undertake—more than your weakness will allow you to perform? Let me remind you that Christian life is *a growth*, and that if you ever begin, you must begin in the littleness and weakness and ignorance of babyhood. You can neither know much nor do much until you come into the enjoyment of life and place yourself under suitable conditions of development. You need to know your sinfulness—that Jesus is your only Saviour—and what he requires you to do to be saved. That is enough to start with. You can not see far, but if you take the lamp of truth in your hand, it will still throw light ahead of you until you reach the heavenly home. You can not do much; but doing what you can, your strength will increase to do more, until you grow “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” There is strength according to our day for every duty and for every trial.

Do you feel that you are not a great sinner—that your life is unstained by any gross sin or

crime? Then you ought to come, not only with a penitential offering for the sins you have committed, but with an earnest thank-offering for the sins from which you have been preserved. You owe as much to the grace of God for preserving you from gross sins as for redeeming you from the sins that really belong to you.

There is an immense advantage in the Christian life in this: its pleasures and treasures are ever increasing—the pleasures and treasures of a sinful life are ever decreasing. The latter are greatest at first, and dwindle in our hands and under our gaze until death turns them all to ashes and leaves us bankrupt. The former are comparatively limited on the start, but they grow “brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.” They are much to the young, more to man in the prime of life, still more to old age, and at the dying hour—all! Every thing else is gone—the treasures of the grace of God alone remain. Just when the worldling becomes hopelessly bankrupt, the Christian enters on his inheritance and is made forever blessed.

The demands of the gospel harmonize with the highest dictates of an enlightened judgment

and the noblest aspirations of a true heart. It is the highest manliness to yield to truth, and to be swayed by a love so ineffably sweet and pure as that which breathes upon us from the heart of the bleeding Jesus. Were not the terrible facts before us, we should deem it incredible that any heart could resist the divinely touching appeals that come to perishing sinners, in the words, and deeds, and sorrows of Jesus of Nazareth. He stooped from heaven to be the partner of our weakness and our shame. He carried our nature through indescribable perils, in life and death—fought its battles, drank its cup of sorrow to the dregs, plucked victory from the grasp of death and hell, and lifted ransomed humanity in a chariot of triumph to the heaven of heavens! From the mount of temptation, where he fought that terrible duel as the champion of our race, and vanquished our most dreaded foe; from the toilsome scenes of a sad and suffering life, where his presence banished the griefs, hallowed the toils, sanctified the trials, and satisfied the deepest cravings of our oppressed nature; from the hot strife of Gethsemane, where through bloody sweat and dreadful struggle he lifted our weak humanity

to a peaceful and blessed victory over fears within and foes without ; from the bitter cross, where his pure heart broke under the weight of reproach and shame borne for us ; from the depths of the grave, where he fought our last battle and spoiled the powers of darkness and swallowed up death in victory ; and from the bright heavens to which he has gone, and where he ever liveth, our Great High Priest and Saviour—he calls to us in accents of mercy, and invites us back to God. Treasures of pardon, adoption, and life eternal are in his hand, and his loving entreaty is, “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 you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Dear reader, whoever you are, to whom this message comes, I pray you, in the name of this Blessed Saviour, Be ye reconciled to God.

Once more we repeat to you the solemn words of Jesus, the Christ, spoken by the Holy Spirit with the impressive admonition, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” “Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice,

and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Sweetly and tenderly has the poet urged this thought, and dwelt on the inevitable result of slighting the prayer of this divine suppliant. God grant that the warning be not spoken in vain.

In the silent midnight watches—  
List! thy bosom door,  
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh—  
Knocketh evermore.  
Say not 'tis thy pulse's beating—  
'Tis thy heart of sin;  
'Tis thy Saviour knocketh, crieth,  
"Rise and let me in."

Death comes down with silent footstep,  
To the hall and hut:  
Think you death will stand a-knocking,  
When the door is shut?  
Jesus waiteth, waiteth, waiteth—  
But the door is fast.  
Grieved, away the Saviour goeth—  
Death breaks in at last!

Then 'tis thine to stand entreating  
Christ to let thee in:  
At the door of heaven beating,  
Wailing for thy sin.

Nay, alas ! thou foolish virgin,  
Hast thou then forgot ?  
Jesus waited long to know thee,  
*Now he knows thee not.*

THE END.

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