

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

TWELVE SELECT ADDRESSES
ON EVANGELICAL THEMES

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CHAPTER I

God's Unspeakable Gift

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift” (2 Cor. 9. 15).

MANY of us have thought a great deal about gifts during the last few weeks. Some of us have experienced much joy in giving, others have found a measure of delight, but not nearly so much as we possibly expected, through receiving gifts. It is still true that “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” and I dare say the happiest people are not those who have received the most, but those who have given the most. Particularly is this true if your gifts have been largely to those in less comfortable circumstances than yourself, and if you have sought to minister to the needs, to brighten the homes of those in poverty, to bring a happy smile to the children's faces, and to cheer weary and distressed mothers and fathers. It is a very blessed and beautiful thing to make gifts in this way.

This is one of the by-products of Christianity. It is because our Lord Jesus Christ has Himself taught us the lesson that “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” that we delight to make gifts in His Name. Even the world itself has caught the blessed infection, and unconverted people find a great deal of joy in sharing with others. And so as we think of gifts, our minds naturally go to the Supreme Gift which God in His marvellous grace has lavished upon a guilty world. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” There are four things about which I would like to speak. First, I want to occupy you with the Giver; second, with the excellency of the gift; third, with the reception of the gift; and then a word of warning against refusing the gift.

I. THE GIVER

“WHO IS THE GIVER?” You remember when addressing the poor woman at the well, our Lord Jesus Christ said, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water” (John 4. 10). God is the Giver. I wish we could get that clearly in our minds.

A great many people think of God as a merchantman; they think that He has something to sell; that He is going about offering His salvation to people if they are rich enough to purchase it. Thank God, He is too rich to sell His salvation. But if He were to put it up for sale; if He were to set a price on it in any sense commensurate with its value, neither you nor I could ever purchase it.

The parable in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew is one that is generally turned upside down. A merchantman came seeking goodly pearls, and “when he found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all he had and bought it.” Almost invariably people make the merchantman the poor sinner, and the pearl God's salvation. But

God's salvation is a free gift, and the pearl had to be purchased, so that interpretation is contrary to fact. We have nothing with which to buy God's salvation.

The real meaning of that parable surely is that our Lord Jesus Christ came from Heaven as the Merchantman with infinite riches at His disposal, and here in this poor dark world He found one pearl of great price, that vast company of men and women who were sunk in sin and iniquity, but who are to be made into the Body and Bride of the Lamb; and having fixed His love upon that pearl, He went and sold all that He had and bought it. Where did He make that great exchange? At Calvary's Cross. There on the Cross He sold all that He had and He shed His own most precious Blood, laid down His life in order that He might purchase the pearl which is to adorn His crown for eternity.

GOD IS A GIVER ; He is not selling to people. Take all the great blessings that we enjoy. We get them freely from God; we cannot buy them. You cannot buy the fresh air that you breathe; you cannot buy the water from the rippling brook. Yes, men can bottle and sell it, but God gives it freely. All the blessings that He lavishes upon men are "without money and without price," and the great gift spoken of here is the expression of His infinite love.

The Minister's Story

My wife's father was a minister of the Gospel. Singularly enough, though I learned to know him fairly well in the days I was pestering him in order to get his daughter, I had the privilege of hearing him preach only three times, but I remember those occasions quite clearly. I have never forgotten an illustration he used of a poor woman who had a very sick daughter. This poor mother went out to work as a char-woman. She had to earn a living for herself, and this child. By and by her daughter became convalescent, and was crying continually for some grapes, though it was winter. The poor mother could not think of purchasing them, for they could be gotten only at an exorbitant price, and yet always when she came home, the child would say, "Did you get me any grapes today?" She offered her other things that were within her means, but nothing satisfied. One day she had been called to work in a different district, a place where she had not been before, and passing a magnificent garden, she saw a great hothouse. Looking over the wall she could see luscious clusters of grapes hanging and ripening. She tried the gate, and finding it open, went in. Hurrying along the pathway she met the gardener who said, "What are you doing here? you have no business here. Don't you know that these are the king's gardens?"

"Oh, sir," she said, "my daughter is sick at home, and she has been crying for grapes, and as I passed I saw the grapes in the hot-house. I have worked hard day after day and have just a shilling, but I will give it all for one bunch of those grapes."

"Get out of here, you have no business in here. I may lose my job for letting you in," and so he drove her out.

She thought, "I suppose he was angry with me because I offered only a shilling for a bunch of grapes. I will try and earn more money, and maybe he will respect my wishes then."

And so she toiled on, and was able to save another shilling, and then forced her

way again inside the gate, and once more met the gardener who said, "Didn't I tell you you must not come in here?"

"But look," she said, "I had only a shilling then; I have two now, and I want a bunch of those grapes for my poor sick daughter. Won't you sell me a bunch?"

He started to tell her to get out, when a beautiful young lady came up, and said, "What is it, my good woman?"

"O Ma'am, if you can do anything for me, won't you, please? My daughter is sick, and is crying continually for grapes, and I saw the beautiful clusters in the hot-house, and wanted to purchase some, but he won't sell them to me. Look, I have two shillings, may I have just one bunch?"

"Oh," said the young lady, "come with me," and she led the woman into the beautiful conservatory, and said, "Hold your apron." She snipped off one bunch and another and another, until the poor woman cried, "No more! I have only two shillings, don't give me any more."

"But I want your daughter to have all she needs; there is life and health in these grapes," and she snipped off more.

The woman finally said, "I am so grateful to you, here are the two shillings."

"Keep your money; my father is not a merchantman, he is the king, and he does not want your money. Take the grapes and tell your daughter they are sent by the princess herself, and are a gift from the king's conservatory."

"But I will be so glad to give you the two shillings. You are welcome to them."

"Oh, no! *A king does not sell; a king delights to give.*"

I have never forgotten that simple illustration for it tells how the heart of God goes out to needy sinners. That was in the apostle's mind when he wrote, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." God has nothing to sell to lost men; and again I repeat, if He were selling His salvation, you would be too poor to buy it, but because it is a gift you may have it for nothing, and may have it now.

II THE EXCELLENCY OF THE GIFT

I do not know whether you have ever noticed it, but three times in the New Testament in our Authorised Version you have this adjective, "unspeakable." Here we read, "Thanks be unto God for His *unspeakable gift*." In the twelfth chapter of this book, the apostle tells us how he was caught up into Paradise, into the third Heaven, and he says he "heard *unspeakable words*, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." And over in the Epistle of Peter, we read of "*joy unspeakable* and full of glory." The word is the same in each instance in our English Translation, but different in every case in the Greek where each term has a very distinct meaning.

Unspeakable Joy

When we read of "joy unspeakable and full of glory," the original word literally means, "unutterable," joy unutterable. When you are very very happy, can you find language to tell what it is like? Here is a young bride; she has just come down the aisle from the marriage altar, and her face is radiant. At her side is her proud young bridegroom. I won't ask the bride, but will ask the groom, "How do you feel now?"

He looks at me and says, "Bully!"

"What do you mean by that? That doesn't tell me anything."

"Well," he says, "I feel *great*."

"Great? You mean that you think you are a wonderful personage?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, what do you mean?"

"I feel *swell*."

"I don't get you yet."

He uses many different words; some are good English, and some are slang, to try to express the joy that he feels to think that she didn't get away from him before she said, "I will." His heart is filled with joy unutterable. It is impossible to tell out your feeling when you are filled with joy. That is the word the apostle uses. And when you have received God's gift, you have a joy that is unspeakable.

Somebody said to an old Scotch woman, "Well, you are converted now."

"Aye, I am."

"How does it feel?"

"Oh, it is better felt than telt."

She was glad, she was happy, and rejoicing; and did not know what words to use to express her joy.

Inexpressible Words

Then in 2 Corinthians 12, where the apostle says he was caught up into Paradise and "heard *unspeakable words*, which it is not lawful for a man to utter," that word is really "inexpressible." That is, having listened to the music of Heaven, having heard the vocabulary of angels and redeemed sinners in the Glory he could not find any words in the Hebrew or Greek languages with which he was familiar, that would properly express the joys of the saints around the throne of God and of the Lamb.

But the word here is still a different one, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." This word literally means, "Not yet *fully expounded*." "Thanks be unto God for His not yet fully expounded gift." That is very suggestive; it tells me that some day I will understand this gift, though as yet I cannot do so. It tells me that God has wonderful things in reserve, which I am going to find out when I get Home to Heaven, but as long as I am down here in the world it will never be fully expounded. We read when the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon to question him concerning the name of the Lord, Solomon answered all her questions, and there was nothing in her heart that he did not explain. And when she saw his glory and all his servants, and the wealth that was His, she said, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (1 Kings 10. 6, 7). She would have to stay on day after day, and month after month, and year after year, to get anything like a real understanding of Solomon's wisdom and glory. And so, as long as you and I are down here, the gift of God will never be *fully expounded*. It will take all eternity to get to the depth of it.

“There are depths of love that I cannot know
Till I cross the narrow sea;
There are heights of joy that I may not reach,
Till I rest in peace with Thee.”

But I may learn more and more of this gift as I go along the way. It is God’s wondrous manifestation of Christ to sinners.

WHAT IS THE GIFT? It has never been fully expounded, but just what is it? In the first place, the Lord Jesus Himself is the Gift of God. “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 3. 16). “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4. 9, 10).

The Lord Jesus Himself is the Gift of God, and let me say it worshipfully, He in all His beauty and glory has never been fully expounded. Millions of sermons have been preached about Him; hundreds of thousands of hymns have been written to celebrate His blessedness and preciousness, but no one yet has told the story in full. “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matt. 11. 27). We talk about the incarnation, the union of God and man in one person, that glorious event which took place so long ago at Bethlehem, but how little we understand about it. It is God’s unspeakable gift.

The Holy Spirit is God’s gift. Our blessed Lord is no longer here on earth, but the Holy Spirit is. Who is there who understands the Spirit of God? Who can explain the Holy Spirit? I myself, one of the weakest and poorest of all God’s servants, have preached hundreds of sermons on the Holy Spirit, but I have never been able to explain Him. I have never been able to exhaust the truth in regard to Him. The Holy Spirit of God is the unspeakable gift.

We read in Romans 6. 23, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Eternal life, then, is the gift of God. Yes, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” and so we are told, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5. 12). Jesus, the Holy Spirit, eternal life, these constitute the gift of God. Explain eternal life. I cannot. It is God’s unspeakable gift, and I hear my Saviour saying, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17. 3).

“O what a gift the Father gave,
When He bestowed His Son;
To save poor ruined guilty men,
By sin defiled and undone.”

III. RECEIVING THE GIFT

What should be our attitude toward a gift like this, and toward the Giver? What

attitude can we have if we are right-thinking people, but to receive the gift and thank the Giver. Have you done that? Have you received the gift and thanked the Giver? Or are you foolish enough to try to do what the poor woman did—are you still offering your paltry little two shillings worth of human merit? Are you saying, “It is very good of Thee to offer me salvation and in such a cheap way, but then you know, I am not absolutely bankrupt; I have a little human merit. I am really a very moral kind of a person, and if you will just take my goodness and my morality and my church membership, and a few more things, I will be glad to exchange these for your gift.”

There is nothing that irritates me more than when I invite some one to go to dinner with me to have him try to snatch the check. In the first place, I generally select a place that is within my means, and I do not invite anyone unless I truly desire his company. I enjoy saying to my friends, “Now, you just take anything you wish.” And then when they say, “It is nice of you, but I would like to pay,” I say “Look here, I didn’t invite you here in order that I might sell you a meal! You are my guest!”

God invites you to come and sit at His table, and receive His wonderful gift, and you insult Him when you talk about paying Him. We have one instance in the Book where the servant of God acting for his master, became intensely indignant. Peter came down to Samaria to see a mighty work of God, and as he laid his hands on men, the Holy Spirit fell on them. There was a wretched fellow who came and offered the apostle money and said, “Give me the power to convey this gift; I will pay you for it, ” and Peter turned on him and said, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that *the gift of God may be purchased with money*. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8. 20-23).

It is a wicked thing to offer God anything for His salvation when it is already paid for by the Blood of His own precious Son. Do not insult Him by pleading any merit of your own, but come as a poor bankrupt sinner; confess you have nothing to offer and be willing to be saved by grace. Receive the gift so freely proffered.

IV. REFUSING THE GIFT

Just a closing word concerning the solemnity of refusing such a gift. Let me quote again that verse I have already repeated, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” What does that tell us? It tells us that if we accept the gift, we have life and salvation; if we refuse, we perish. God would never have put it in the way He did in that verse if we were not to so understand it. Accept Christ and live; refuse Him and perish.

Some years ago a young man, careless and indifferent entered a mission hall. He sat and looked curiously around the room, and saw on the wall a printed motto, and he read carefully, “It must be Christ or Hell. To neglect the one is to choose the other.” He did not like that; he did not like the word “hell” stuck up on a sign. You

would not like it put in your parlour for your friends to read. That young man looked at the sign, re-read it, and then said to himself, "That is pretty serious. I guess that is what I have been doing all my life. I have neglected Christ, though I never thought of choosing hell. But I believe that sign is right. By the grace of God, it will be Christ from now on," and he was saved that night.

I was having meetings in a western city, and was introduced to a young woman, and was told, "She will sing a solo tonight."

"What do you want me to sing?" she asked.

I said, "I have a song here," and I gave her my book. I was going to preach on Eternity and showed her the hymn, "Eternity."

"Eternity! time soon will end,
It's fleeting moments pass away;
O sinner, say where wilt thou spend
Eternity's unchanging day?
Shalt thou the hopeless horror see
Of hell for all eternity?"

She looked at it and said, "I don't like that word."

"Which word?"

She put her dainty finger on the word, "Hell," and I said, "You don't like that word?"

"No, that is not a nice word to sing. I never sing words like that."

"Well," I said, "you will sing that or nothing for me."

She went away, but she came back a half- hour later with tears in her eyes and said, "I guess I will sing it if you still want me to."

I inquired, "Do you really believe it?"

"Yes, I think I do. I have been looking it up, and the Word is used in the Bible quite a little." "It is," I said, "and God means men to know that it must be heaven or hell for eternity."

If you refuse the gift of God, there is nothing but judgment ahead. Accept the gift and live. Reject it and perish.

People do not like to hear of judgment to come. They would rather listen to smooth things, and hear sweet and eloquent discourses on the love and the goodness of God. But it is because He loves us that He so solemnly warns us of the fearful consequences of refusing His unspeakable gift, the reception of which will save from unspeakable misery, both in time and in eternity.

"Tonight may be thy latest breath,
Thy little moment here be done.
Eternal woe, the second death—
Awaits the grace-neglecting one;
Thine awful destiny foresee,
Time ends and then—Eternity.

"Eternity! but Jesus died,
Yes, Jesus died on Calvary;

Behold Him, thorn-crowned, crucified,
The sinless One made sin for thee.
O sinner haste, for refuge flee,
He saves and for eternity.”

CHAPTER II

What is the Gospel?

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15. 1-4).

IT might seem almost a work of supererogation to answer a question like this. We hear the word, “Gospel” used so many times. People talk of this and of that as being, “as true as the Gospel,” and I often wonder what they really mean by it. What is the Gospel? First I should like to indicate what it is not.

Not the Bible

In the first place, the Gospel is not the Bible. Often when I inquire, “What do you think the Gospel is?” people reply, “Why, it is the Bible, and the Bible is the Word of God.” Undoubtedly the Bible is the Word of God, but there is a great deal in that Book that is not Gospel.

“The wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” That is in the Bible, and it is terribly true; but it is not Gospel.

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” That is in the Bible, but it is not Gospel.

Our English word, “gospel” just means the “*good spell*”, and the word “spell” is the old Anglo-Saxon word for “tidings,” the good tidings, the good news. The original word translated “gospel,” which we have taken over into the English with little alteration is the word, “evangel,” and it has the same meaning, the good news. The Gospel is God’s good news for sinners. The Bible contains the Gospel, but there is a great deal in the Bible which is not Gospel.

Not the Commandments

The Gospel is not just any message from God telling man how he should behave. “What is the Gospel?” I asked a man this question some time ago, and he answered, “Why, I should say it is the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, and I think if a man lives up to them he is all right.” Well, I fancy he would be; but did you ever know anybody who lived up to them? The Ten Commandments ask of sinful man an obedience that no fallen creature has ever given. The Sermon on the Mount demands a righteousness which no unregenerate man has been able to produce. The law is not the

Gospel; it is the very antithesis of the Gospel. In fact, *the law was given by God to show men their need of the Gospel.*

“The law,” says the Apostle Paul, speaking as a Jewish convert, “was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. But after that Christ is come we are no longer under the schoolmaster.”

Not Repentance

The Gospel is not a call to repentance, or to amendment of one's ways, to make restitution for his past sins, or to promise to do better in the future. These things are all perfectly right and perfectly proper in their place, but they do not constitute the Gospel; for the Gospel is not good advice to be obeyed, it is good news to be believed. Do not make the mistake then of thinking that the Gospel is a call to duty or a call to reformation, a call to better your condition, to behave yourself in a more perfect way than you have been doing in the past.

Not Giving Up the World

Nor is the Gospel a demand that you give up the world, that you give up your sins, that you break off bad habits, and try to cultivate good ones. You may do all these things, and yet never believe the Gospel and consequently never be saved at all.

THERE ARE SEVEN DESIGNATIONS OF THE GOSPEL in the New Testament, but over and above all these, let me draw your attention to the fact that when this blessed message is mentioned, it is invariably accompanied by the definite article. Over and over and over again in the New Testament we read of *the* Gospel. It is *the* Gospel; not *a* Gospel. People tell us there are a great many different Gospels; but there is only ONE. When certain teachers came to the Galatians and tried to turn them away from the simplicity that was in Christ Jesus by teaching “*another* Gospel,” the apostle said that it was a different gospel, but not another; for there is none other than *the* Gospel. It is down-right exclusive; it is God's revelation to sinful man.

Not Comparative Religion

The scholars of this world talk of the Science of Comparative Religions, and it is very popular now-a-days to say, “We cannot any longer go to heathen nations and preach to them as in the days gone by, because we are learning that their religions are just as good as ours, and the thing to do now is to share with them, to study the different religions, take the good out of them all, and in this way lead the world into a sense of brotherhood and unity.”

So in our great universities and colleges men study this Science of Comparative Religions, and they compare all these different religious

systems one with another. There is a Science of Comparative Religions, but the Gospel is not one of them. All the different religions in the world may well be studied comparatively, for at rock-bottom they are all alike; they all set man at trying to earn his own salvation. They may be called by different names, and the things that men are called to *do* may be different in each case, but they all set men trying to save their own souls and earn their way into the favour of God. In this they stand in vivid contrast with *the* Gospel, for *the* Gospel does not come to men to tell them to do anything, but *the* Gospel is that glorious message that tells us what God has *done* for us in order that guilty sinners may be saved.

THE SEVEN DESIGNATIONS OF THIS GOSPEL.

It is called

I. The Gospel of the Kingdom,

and when I use that term I am not thinking particularly of any dispensational application, but of this blessed truth that it is only through believing the Gospel that men are born into the Kingdom of God. We sing:

“A ruler once came to Jesus by night,
To ask Him the way of salvation and light;
The Master made answer in words true and plain,
‘YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.’”

But neither Nicodemus, nor you, nor I, could ever bring this about ourselves. We had nothing to do with our first birth, and can have nothing to do with our second birth. It must be the work of God, and it is wrought through the Gospel. That is why the Gospel is called the Gospel of the Kingdom, for, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3. 3, 7). “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. . . . And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1. 23-25).

Everywhere that Paul and his companion apostles went they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and they showed that the only way to get into that Kingdom was by a second birth, and that the only way whereby the second birth could be brought about was through believing the Gospel. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom.

It is also called

II The Gospel of God,

because God is the source of it, and it is altogether of Himself. No man ever thought of a Gospel like this. The very fact that all the religions of the world

set man to try to work for his own salvation indicates the fact that no man would ever have dreamed of such a Gospel as that which is revealed in this Book. It came from the heart of God; it was God who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4. 9, 10). And because it is the Gospel of God, God is very jealous of it. He wants it kept pure. He does not want it mixed with any of man’s theories or laws; He does not want it mixed up with religious ordinances or anything of that kind. The Gospel is God’s own pure message to sinful man. God grant that you and I may receive it as in very truth the Gospel of God.

And then it is also called

III. The Gospel of His Son.

Not merely because the Son went everywhere preaching the Gospel, but because He is the theme of it. “When it pleased God,” says the apostle, “who called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the nations; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1. 15, 16). “We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1. 23, 24). No man preaches the Gospel who is not exalting the Lord Jesus. It is God’s wonderful message about His Son. How often I have gone to meetings where they told me I would hear the Gospel, and instead of that I have heard some bewildered preacher talk to a bewildered audience about everything and anything, but the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel has to do with nothing else but Christ. It is the Gospel of God’s Son. And so, linked with this it is called

IV. The Gospel of Christ.

The Apostle Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost of the risen Saviour, says, “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ?” and He speaks of Him as the anointed One, exalted at God’s right hand.

The Gospel is the Gospel of the Risen Christ. There would be no Gospel for sinners if Christ had not been raised. So the apostle says, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor. 15. 17).

A great New York preacher, great in his impertinence, at least, said some years ago, preaching a so-called Easter sermon, “The body of Jesus still sleeps in a Syrian tomb, but His soul goes marching on.”

That is not the Gospel of Christ. We are not preaching the Gospel of a

dead Christ, but of a living Christ who sits exalted at the Father's right hand, and is living to save all who put their trust in Him. That is why those of us who really know the Gospel never have any crucifixes around our churches or in our homes. The crucifix represents a dead Christ hanging languid on a cross of shame. But we are not preaching a dead Christ; we are not pointing men to a dead Christ; we are preaching a living Christ. He lives exalted at God's right hand, and He "saves to the uttermost all who come to God by Him."

This Gospel is also called

V. The Gospel of the Grace of God,

because it leaves no room whatever for human merit. It just brushes away all man's pretension to any goodness, to any desert excepting judgment. It is the Gospel of grace, and grace is God's free unmerited favour to those who have merited the very opposite. It is as opposite to works as oil is to water. "If by grace," says the Spirit of God, "then it is no more works . . . but if it be of works, then is it no more grace" (Rom. 11. 6).

People say, "But you must have both." I have heard it put like this: there was a boatman and two theologians in a boat, and one was arguing that salvation was by faith and the other by works. The boatman listened, and then said, "Let me tell you how it looks to me. Suppose I call this oar Faith and this one Works. If I pull on this one, the boat goes around; if I pull on this other one, it goes around the other way, but if I pull on both oars, I get you across the river."

I have heard many preachers use that illustration to prove that we are saved by faith and works. That might do if we were going to Heaven in a rowboat, but we are not. We are carried on the shoulders of the Shepherd, who came seeking lost sheep. When He finds them He carries them home on His shoulders.

But there are some other names used. It is called

VI. The Gospel of the Glory of God.

I love that name. It is the Gospel of the Glory of God because it comes from the place where our Lord Jesus has entered. The veil has been rent, and now the glory shines out; and whenever this Gospel is proclaimed, it tells of a way into the glory for sinful man, a way to come before the Mercy Seat purged from every stain. It is the Gospel of the Glory of God, because, until Christ had entered into the Glory, it could not be preached in its fulness, but, after the glory received Him, then the message went out to a lost world.

It is also called

VII. The Everlasting Gospel

because it will never be superseded by another. No other ever went before it, and no other shall ever come after it.

One of the professors of the University of Chicago wrote a book a few years ago in which he tried to point out that some of these days Jesus would be superseded by a greater teacher; then He and the Gospel that He taught would have to give way to a message which would be more suited to the intelligence of the cultivated men of the later centuries.

No, no, were it possible for this world to go on a million years, it would never need any other Gospel than this preached by the Apostle Paul and confirmed by the Holy Ghost with signs following; the Gospel which, throughout the centuries has been saving guilty sinners.

VIII. The Gospel Declared

What then is the content of this Gospel? We are told right here. "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." There is such a thing as merely believing with the intelligence and crediting some doctrine with the mind when the heart has not been reached. But wherever men believe this Gospel in real faith, they are saved through the message. What is it that brings this wonderful result? It is a simple story, and yet how rich, how full.

"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received." I think his heart must have been stirred as he wrote those words, for he went back in memory to nearly thirty years before, and thought of that day when hurrying down the Damascus turnpike, with his heart filled with hatred toward the Lord Jesus Christ and His people, he was thrown to the ground, and a light shone, and he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he cried, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the voice said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." And that day Saul learned the Gospel; he learned that He who died on the Cross had been raised from the dead, and that He was living in the Glory. At that moment his soul was saved, and Saul of Tarsus was changed to Paul the Apostle. And now he says, "I am going to tell you what I have received; it is a real thing with me, and I know it will work the same wonderful change in you, if you will believe it."

First of all, "That Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures." Then, "that He was *buried*;" then, "that He *rose again* the third day according to the Scriptures." Notice that phrase, "According to the Scriptures." "The Gospel was no new thing in God's mind. It had been predicted throughout the Old Testament times. Every time the coming Saviour was mentioned, there was proclamation of the Gospel. It began in Eden when the Lord said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." It was typified in every

sacrifice that was offered. It was portrayed in the wonderful Tabernacle, and later in the Temple.

We have it in the proclamation of Isaiah, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His stripes we are healed.” It was preached by Jeremiah when he said, “This is His Name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness” (Jer. 23. 6). It was declared by Zechariah when he exclaimed, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is my fellow . . . smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones” (Zech. 13. 7).

All through those Old Testament dispensations, the Gospel was predicted, and when Jesus came, the Gospel came with Him. When He died, when He was buried, and when He rose again, the Gospel could be fully told out to a poor lost world. Observe, it says, “that *Christ died for our sins*.” No man preaches the Gospel, no matter what nice things he may say about Jesus, if he leaves out His vicarious death on Calvary’s Cross.

Christ’s Death—not His Life

I was preaching in a church in Virginia, and a minister prayed, “Lord, grant Thy blessing as the Word is preached tonight. May it be the means of causing people to fall in love with the Christ-life, that they may begin to live the Christ-life.” I felt like saying, “Brother, sit down; don’t insult God like that;” but then I felt I had to be courteous, and I knew that my turn would come, when I could get up and give them the truth.

The Gospel is not asking men to live the Christ-life. If your salvation depends upon your doing that, you are just as good as checked for Hell, for you never can live it in yourself. It is utterly impossible. But the very first message of the Gospel is the story of the vicarious atonement of Christ. Jesus did not come to tell men how to live in order that they might save themselves; He did not come to save men by living His beautiful life. That, apart from His death, would never have saved one poor sinner. *He came to die*; He “was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.” Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. When He instituted the Lord’s Supper He said, “Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. . . . This cup is the new covenant in My Blood” (1 Cor. 11. 24, 25). There is no Gospel if the vicarious death of Jesus is left out, and there is no other way whereby you can be saved than through the death of the blessed spotless Son of God.

Someone says, “But I do not understand it.” That is a terrible confession to make, for “If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2 Cor. 4. 3). If you do not understand this, if you do not see that there is no other way of salvation for you, save through the death of the Lord Jesus, then that just

tells the sad story that you are among the lost. You are not merely in danger of being lost in the Day of Judgment; but you are lost *now*. But, thank God, “the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,” and seeking the lost He went to the Cross.

“None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through,
Ere He found the sheep that was lost.”

The Necessity of Death

HE HAD TO DIE, to go down into the dark waters of death, that you might be saved. Can you think of any ingratitude more base than that of a man or woman who passes by the life offered by the Saviour who died on the Cross for them? Jesus died for you, and can it be that you have never even trusted Him, never even come to Him and told Him you were a poor, lost, ruined, guilty sinner; but since He died for you, you would take Him as your Saviour?

HIS DEATH WAS REAL. He was buried three days in the tomb. He died, He was buried, and that was God’s witness that it was not a merely pretended death, but He, the Lord of life, had to go down into death. He was held by the bars of death for those three days and nights, until God’s appointed time had come. Then, “Death could not keep its prey, He tore the bars away.” And so the third point of the Gospel is this, “He was raised again the third day according to the Scriptures.” That is the Gospel, and nothing can be added to that.

Some people say, “Well, but must I not repent?” Yes, you may well repent, but that is not the Gospel. “Must I not be baptized?” If you are a Christian, you ought to be baptized, but baptism is not the Gospel. Paul said, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel” (1 Cor. 1. 17). He did baptize people, but he did not consider that was the Gospel, and the Gospel was the great message that he was sent to carry to the world. This is all there is to it. “Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was *buried*, and *rose again* the third day according to the Scriptures.”

The Gospel Accepted

Look at the result of believing the Gospel. Go back to verse two, “By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” That is, if you believe the Gospel, you are saved; if you believe that Christ died for your sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again, God says you are saved. Do you believe it? No man ever believed that except by the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit of God that overcomes

the natural unbelief of the human heart and enables a man to put his trust in that message. And this is not mere intellectual credence, but it is that one comes to the place where he is ready to stake his whole eternity on the fact that Christ died, and was buried, and rose again. When Jesus said, "IT IS FINISHED," the work of salvation was completed.

A dear saint was dying, and looking up he said, "It is finished; on that I can cast my eternity."

"Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die;
Another's life, another's death,
I stake my whole eternity."

Can you say that, and say it in faith?

The Gospel Rejected

What about the man who does not believe the Gospel? The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that *believeth not* shall be damned" (Mark 16. 15, 16). He that believeth not shall be devoted to judgment, condemned, lost. So you see, God has shut us up to the Gospel. Have you believed it? Have you put your trust in it; is it the confidence of your soul? Or have you been trusting in something else? If you have been resting in anything short of the Christ who died, who was buried, who rose again, I plead with you, turn from every other fancied refuge, and flee to Christ today. Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

"O, do not let the word depart,
And close thine eyes against the light;
Poor sinner, harden not thy heart,
Thou wouldst be saved—why not tonight?"

CHAPTER III

Who is This Son of Man?

“And Jesus answered them saying, the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. . . . And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die. The people answered Him. We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: but how sayest Thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” (JOHN 12. 23, 32-34).

THE title which our blessed Saviour and Lord seemed most to delight in when He was on earth was that of “SON OF MAN.” Its very universality had a large appeal for the heart of Him who came “not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. “As to the mystery of His person, He was first of all Son of God, though born of a virgin mother. As the promised Seed through whom all nations are yet to be blest, He was the Son of Abraham. As Israel’s Messiah and King, He was the Son of David. But as heir of the world and Saviour of mankind, He was the Son of Man.

Thoughtless persons, and surface thinkers, have often declared that Christ nowhere announced His own deity. From this they have drawn the conclusion that He was not God incarnate, but was simply a god-like man, the best and the greatest that the human race has produced. It was His admiring disciples, they tell us, and other followers of His in the early Christian centuries who, in their thinking, raised Him to the plane of deity, and worshipped Him as more than man.

All such assertions are based upon mere assumptions and ignorance. It is true that our Lord nowhere said in so many words, “I am God the Son become man for the redemption of the human race; I am the second person of the eternal Trinity, and, therefore, to be worshipped as God the Father is worshipped.” To have done so would have been self-assertion, ill-becoming the humiliation to which He had stooped in grace, when He came from the glory of the Father down to this dark world of sin. But no one can carefully read the Gospel records with unprejudiced mind, without seeing that He acted as none but God could act on many occasions. For instance, when He multiplied the loaves and stilled the raging tempests by His word. And “He spake as never man spake,” using language concerning Himself, which would be either meaningless or crudely bombastic, if He had not known Himself to be God manifest in the flesh.

This comes out very clearly in connection with His use of the very title which unbelievers insist is in itself a denial of deity. I want to ask you hearers to constitute yourselves a jury and listen to the evidence which He himself gives concerning His divine personality, and then I would have you answer,

each for himself, the question put by the perturbed Jews as recorded in John 12. 34, “Who is this Son of Man?”

I shall select seven passages out of the scores that are available, and I beg you to note what is implied in each one of them concerning the true nature of this blessed One who calls Himself the Son of Man.

I. Lord of the Sabbath

In Matthew 12, verses 1 to 8, we have the familiar incident of the Lord and His disciples plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. In meeting the objections of the Pharisees, who claimed that such procedure was unlawful on the Sabbath, He declares, “The Son of Man is *Lord even of the Sabbath day.*”

What a remarkable statement to come from the lips of a mere man! The Sabbath was the sign of God’s covenant relationship with His people Israel. Again and again He asserts His own authority in a special way in connection with that day. In Isaiah 58. 13 and 14, He says, “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

Now observe, God calls the Sabbath “MY HOLY DAY.” In other words, Jehovah Himself is Lord of the Sabbath day. While it is true that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” yet no man as such, would have authority to regulate human behaviour on that day, or to decree how it should be observed. But our Lord Jesus Christ assumes that very position. He sweeps to one side the regulations of the Scribes and Pharisees, the traditions of the elders, and the additions to the law made by the rabbis, and declares that He is greater than the Temple in which the priests carry on their work on the Sabbath and are blameless, and, therefore, He absolves His disciples of all stigma of impiety because of their action as they walked with Him through the fields, and calmly announces that “the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.” What must His hearers have thought of such a declaration? How could His disciples explain such an apparent assumption of authority unless they recognised the fact that *He spoke not merely as man, but as God.*

Imagine one of the rabbis declaring himself to be lord of the Sabbath day! Think of any prophet in Israel making such a declaration! But Jesus does this very thing. In view of it, I put the question to you today, and beg you to thoughtfully consider ere you answer, “Who is this Son of Man?”

II. The Saviour of Sinners

Let us now turn to Luke's Gospel, chapter 19, verse 10. "For the Son of Man is come TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST." These words were spoken, as you will recall, in connection with our Lord's visit to Jericho, when He went to be a guest in the home of Zacchaeus, the Publican. In answer to the carping criticism of the self-righteous Jews who blamed Him for going "to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," He declares, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." That is, He recognises the faith that was in the heart of Zacchaeus, and, therefore, links him up with believing Abraham, and then he tells of the great mission of the Son of Man. He came not to call the righteous, but to seek and to save that which was lost. Now observe, He does not say that He came to *show* the lost how they might be saved. He did not come to instruct them as to what to do in order that they might be delivered from their sad condition. He did not come to *point* them to some one greater than Himself, who could do for them what He could not. But He Himself came to *seek* them out as the Good Shepherd, and to *save* them from their lost estate. The Psalmist said, "In God is my salvation," but here is the Son, who to all outward appearances is but a man among men, and yet the Saviour of sinners! Again I ask you to consider well the question and to answer as you will wish you had in the Day of Judgment, "Who is this Son of Man?"

III. The Forgiver of Sins

In the next instance, we will look at the Gospel of Mark, chapter 2, verse 10. "The Son of Man hath POWER ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS." It is the well-known story of the healing of the palsied man who came to Him borne of four, and when they could not get near to where the blessed Lord was, they uncovered the roof, and let the sick man down by cords at the very feet of Jesus. We are told that, "When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, *thy sins be forgiven thee*. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts. Why doth this Man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."

What a marvellous scene, and what a testimony to the mysterious wonderful character of the teacher and healer who stood in their midst that

day! They were perfectly right in declaring that it would be blasphemy for any mere man to talk of forgiving sins. This was the prerogative of God alone. And yet our Lord claimed the ability to do this very thing, and not only claimed it, but evidenced His authority by rebuking the disease and healing the palsied man.

They could not have known whether His forgiveness was valid or not, had He simply uttered the words, but accompanied as these words were, by the miracle of healing, they must have realised in their souls that God the Father confirmed the declaration of His Son.

The Son of Man then has power on earth to forgive sins. On more than one occasion, He exercised this power. Weary, conscience-smitten, sin-stricken souls came weeping to His feet, and went away rejoicing in a sense of divine forgiveness. Oh, caviller, I beg of you, do not seek to turn aside the force of this, but face the question honestly. “Who is this Son of Man?” Can He who thus forgives sin be any less than God Himself in grace become man for our redemption?

IV. The Kinsman-Redeemer

In the tenth chapter of the same Gospel, we have another marvellous declaration. In verse 45, we read, “For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In the Forty-ninth Psalm, we read of all the sons of men, that “none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” The reason, of course, is that every man is under the sentence of death and judgment for his own sins, and, therefore, no one has merit sufficient to enable him to redeem another from the power of the grave. The eighth verse as literally translated, emphasises this. “For the redemption of the soul is costly, and must be let alone for ever.”

So far then as man is concerned, mere man, sinful man, corrupt man, it is hopeless looking for redemption through his poor efforts.

But here in the Gospel is the One who calls Himself the Son of Man, and yet makes the amazing statement that *He is come to give His life a ransom for many*. Here is the true Kinsman-Redeemer, the One for whom Job yearned. He can put His hand upon both God and man, and bring the offended Majesty of the Heavens and the guilty sinner together in peace, through His own atoning death. Who can this wondrous Person be who claims that He came to earth on so marvellous a mission? “Who is this Son of Man?”

V. Lord of the Angels

Turning back to Matthew, let us notice chapter 13, verse 41, “The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall *gather out of His Kingdom*

all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” Can you imagine any mere mortal in his right mind speaking like this? Angels are supernatural beings greater in power and might than mankind, and yet the Son of Man speaks of His angels, and asserts His authority over them. They do His bidding. He sends them, and they act in accordance with His orders.

The founders of the great oriental religious systems never dreamed of speaking like this. Gautama Buddha never talked of his angels. Zoroaster, the founder of the religion of the Parsees, nowhere assumed authority over the hosts of Heaven. Mohammed, while claiming signal honours, never took so high a place as this.

For any other man to speak of sending forth his angels would be an evidence of *paranoia*. We would brand him immediately as insane, and we should expect to find him saying and doing most extravagant things. But there is no evidence of lack of mental balance here. Our blessed Lord was speaking in the calmest possible way when He made such astounding assertions, and it never even occurred to anyone to call His words in question. As Son of Man, He was the Sower of the good seed, and it is the Son of Man who will send forth His angels to destroy the tares and gather in the harvest at the end of the age. Again I plead with you, face the question honestly, and answer it, as in the presence of God, “Who is this Son of Man?”

VI. Coming in Power and Glory

In Matthew 24, our Lord answers certain questions of His disciples in regard to His second Coming. In verse 27, He says, “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; *so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be.*” In verse 30, He adds, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man Coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.”

In the verse that follows, He again uses the same expression that has already challenged our attention in the previous instance. He says, “He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Further down in the chapter in verses 37 to 39, He says, “But as the days of Noe were so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.”

And again in verse 44, “Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.”

Six times then in this one chapter, and again in verse 31 of chapter 25,

He speaks of *the return of the Son of Man*. That return is to be accomplished by a marvellous display of divine power. His Coming will be as lightning flashing across the Heavens. He will be seen riding in glory upon the clouds of the sky. He will appear as the Judge of all living, and their destiny will be determined by Himself. Could there be any stronger proof that He knew He was God incarnate? What amazing declarations for any man to make, unless that Man be also God! Read this chapter carefully; weigh each expression thoughtfully, and then be honest enough to face the question without any bias or pre-judgment, “Who is this Son of Man?”

VII. The Life-giver and Judge

We shall pause to look at but one more passage, and this is found in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John. Let us read verses 25 to 29, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And hath given authority to execute judgment also, *because He is the Son of Man*. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

In verse 25, He speaks of Himself as Son of God, who during all this age of grace is quickening dead souls. They who hear His voice, though dead in trespasses and sins, receive divine and eternal life. It is the will of the Father thus to save all who trust in Him, and the Father has delegated the execution of judgment to Him, because He is the Son of Man.

We know from other Scriptures that men must stand at the judgment bar of God. It is “God who will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil” (Eccles. 12. 14). But when men are summoned from the tomb, and stand at the bar of God, they will behold seated upon the Great White Throne, the *Son of Man*. His voice it is that will awaken the dead. Both the saved and the unsaved shall rise at His call; the saved in the resurrection of life, and the unsaved in the resurrection of judgment; and every man shall give account to Him. He attributes to Himself fullest divine authority. He makes Himself the touchstone of every heart; He assumes the right to judge every man. Such claims are nothing short of blasphemous unless He be in very truth the divine Son of the living God, one with the Father from all eternity.

In closing, I plead with you again, if you have had any doubt concerning the person of Jesus in the past, to weigh all this evidence, and answer the question in the light of that judgment throne, “WHO IS THIS SON OF MAN?”

“Majestic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon the Saviour’s brow;
His head with radiant glories crowned,
His lips with grace o’erflow.

“No mortal can with Him compare,
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair
That fill the heavenly train.

“He saw me plunged in deep distress,
And flew to my relief;
For me He bore the shameful cross,
And carried all my grief.

“To Him I owe my life and breath,
And all the joys I have;
He makes me triumph over death,
And saves me from the grave.

“Since from His bounty I receive
Such proofs of love divine,
Had I a thousand hearts to give,
Lord, they should all be Thine.”

CHAPTER IV

May I be Assured of Salvation? If so, How?

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God” (1 John 5. 9-13).

SO far as I can recall, the Apostle John is the only writer in Holy Scripture who tells distinctly why he wrote two of his books. In the twentieth chapter of his Gospel he tells us why he wrote that book. After having related certain very remarkable things in the life of our Lord Jesus, he says, in verse thirty, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book” (some of them are written in the other books: Matthew, Mark, and Luke); “but these are written” (that is, the particular things that are recorded in John’s Gospel) “*that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.*” That is

Why the Gospel was Written.

That which is recorded here, these various events, the remarkable miraculous signs, and the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, the stories of His life, His death, and His resurrection as given in this book, these are all written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing you might have life through His Name.

When John comes to the close of his epistle, he tells us his reason for writing it. “These things” (that is, the things that are written in the epistle) “have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know *that ye have eternal life*” (1 John 5. 13). Notice the difference. When he wrote the Gospel, he had in mind people who were not sure as to who Jesus was; people who had heard of Him, or who might never have heard of Him. They did not know that He was the Son of God, and so the Spirit of God led the apostle by divine inspiration to record the various facts that we have in that Gospel in order that people reading it might get the knowledge of the Son of God, that they might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Possibly some one here is what is called

“An Honest Doubter”

—I suppose there is such a thing, but I do not like the expression. Tennyson has written, “There is more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half your creeds.” I am not so sure that Tennyson was correct. I would not like to go home and tell my wife something, and have her say, “Well, my dear, I am trying to believe you, but honestly, I doubt you. I believe there is more faith in honest doubt than in being too sure you are not putting one over on me.”

I question very much whether the eternal God gets any satisfaction out of any man who says, “I would like to believe, but honestly I doubt what is recorded in Holy Scripture.” I have an idea that there is only one reason why people cannot believe the Bible, and that is because *they are living in some kind of sin* which that Bible condemns. I believe that if men will judge their sin before God; if they will come to God honestly desiring to be saved from their sin, repenting of their sin, and seeking deliverance from it, they will have no difficulty about believing the testimony that God has given.

If you have any doubt as to who Jesus really is;

If you question His Deity,

if you question His Messiahship, if you are saying, “If He is the Son of God, I would like to know it; if He is indeed more than a mere man, more than the best of teachers; if He is divine, superhuman, if He is the Son of God become flesh, I would like to know it”—if you honestly want to find out, then read the Gospel of John, because that was written, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name.”

You see what follows; after you believe and accept the revelation given here, after you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then, as sure as night follows day, so surely do you have eternal life.

Let me read a passage from the epistle that establishes that. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5. 1). The Gospel is not a system of laws to be obeyed, but it is good news to be believed; it is God’s good news about His blessed Son. He has sent that good news into the world, and He calls on men to believe it; and the moment they do, they are born of God. The moment they believe it, they have eternal life.

It follows that there are a great many people who do believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and yet they are not sure they have eternal life; they are not absolutely certain that they are born again.

They Would Die for the Truth

of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, if we were living under such conditions that have prevailed at many other times in the Christian centuries, when people were put to death if they did not deny the Name of Jesus. There are many people in Christendom who would go to the stake rather than deny that Jesus is the Son of God; and yet they are utterly without *assurance* that their souls are saved. They hope they are saved; they hope they have eternal life; they hope to get to Heaven eventually, but are not certain.

John wrote the Gospel that people “might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing they might have life through His Name.” He wrote his epistle for people who have already believed that Jesus is the Christ, but who do not have the assurance of salvation, and he says, “These things have I written unto you *that believe*.” He is not addressing people who are in difficulty about believing, but he says, “These things have I written unto you *that believe* on the Name of the Son of God; that ye *might know* that ye have eternal life.” This makes it absolutely clear that it is the will of God that we who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ should have positive assurance of our own salvation.

The Word and the Work

Assurance comes through believing the Word. I am saved through the Work that Jesus did; I have the assurance of my salvation through believing the Word. Go back to verse 9, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath witnessed concerning His Son.” Language could not be simpler than that. There is nothing abstruse, nothing cryptic, nothing hard to understand. You receive the witness of men concerning those things which you have no opportunity of testing for yourselves. If you have confidence in the men who bear testimony, you believe them. You believe them because you take it that these men are honest; that they are not trying to deceive you. Very well,

“The Witness of God is Greater.”

God has borne testimony to a wonderful, a grand, a glorious fact, namely, that He has sent His only begotten Son into the world that you and I might live through Him; that He sent Him to be the propitiation for our sins. The greater part of the New Testament is taken up with this witness, with this testimony, with this record that God has given of Christ His Son, and He asks you to believe that record.

If you believe the record of men in whom you have confidence, we would challenge you with the question, Do you have more confidence in frail fallible human testimony than you have in God’s immutable, infallible, divine testimony? Is it easier for you to believe that a neighbour is telling the

truth than it is to believe that God is telling the truth? God has been at great pains to give you the record of His Son. He has taken up one man after another, laid hold of them by the Holy Spirit, empowered them to present the testimony. He has given us four wonderful records of the life, the death, and the resurrection of His Blessed Son. We read elsewhere, "The Testimony of two men is true"; and again, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established," but here

You Have Four Witnesses

of the most reputable character, to the story of the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then you have the wonderful testimony of the spread of Christianity through the world, the lives that were miraculously changed, as recorded in the Book of Acts; and in the epistolary portions of the New Testament, we have letters from men who knew the saving power of the grace of God themselves, and bore definite witness to the wonders that grace had wrought. All this is given to you as God's own testimony, and He says to you, "Now treat Me and My testimony as fairly as you treat man and his testimony." "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God which He hath witnessed concerning His Son."

Then he adds, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." What does he mean by that? Does he mean that when I accept this divine testimony, I immediately have a strange, peculiar, happy feeling; that I have a remarkable emotional experience whereby I may know that I am a Christian; that I may know that I have passed from death unto life because of this emotional experience which takes place within me? Not at all. Never once is the man who is seeking the assurance of salvation told to look within in order to obtain that assurance; never once is he thrown back upon any emotional experience; never once is he told to consider his feeling.

How frequently when we present the Way of Life to people, and ask them if they will trust the Lord, they say, "Yes, I believe I can trust Him." Then we ask, "Can you accept the record that God gives you eternal life?" And they look at you in a dazed way and say,

"I Don't Feel Very Different."

Your feelings have nothing to do with it whatever.

I can say to the glory of God that forty-two years ago, as just a lad, I knelt one night before God in my own little room in Los Angeles, confessed myself a sinner, turned to God's holy Word, read the testimony God had given concerning His Son in Romans 3 and John 3, and I told the Lord I would believe His testimony. I read that "God so loved the world that He gave His

only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” and I remember saying to the Lord, “Now Lord, *Thou hast said it, and I believe it*; Thou hast said that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life. I do believe in Him. I take Thee at Thy word, and thank Thee for giving me everlasting life.”

Then, I can remember as though it were yesterday, I stopped quietly before God; I ceased praying and expected to have a sudden rush of feeling, a most intense emotional experience, but it did not come, so I said, “I think I must have been mistaken; I will have to go over it all again,” and then I read, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God.”

I saw that there were

Two Classes of People,

he that *believeth*, and he that *believeth not*; I saw that there were two results, “he that believeth in Him is *not condemned*; he that believeth not is *condemned already*, because he hath not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God.” I remember facing that Scripture and saying to myself, “Two classes and I certainly must belong to one or the other. To which class do I belong?” And I looked up into the face of God and said, “Thou knowest I belong to the first class; I do believe on the Son of God.” Very well, “He that believeth on Him is not condemned.” So I said, “Blessed Lord, I take Thee at Thy word, I am not condemned. *Thou hast said it, and I believe it*,” and again I looked for some emotional experience and it did not come. But I said, “Never mind, I have God’s Word for it, and I believe it. ”

I thanked Him, rose from my knees, and took down a little sign I had over my bed. I had been troubled for a long time about my soul, and somebody had given me a tract that read like this:

A Remarkable Card

“IF I DIE TONIGHT. I WILL SPEND
ETERNITY IN [HEAVEN or HELL]
BECAUSE I [HAVE or HAVE NOT] BELIEVED
IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS
CHRIST AS MY PERSONAL SAVIOUR”

A preacher had asked me if I would fill that out honestly, and I did; and hung it over the head of my bed. I had filled it in like this, “If I die tonight, I will spend Eternity in *Hell* because I *have not* believed in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. ” I had signed my name, and put it over the head of my bed, but that night I went over to the bed and pulled

that down, put it in the waste basket, and said, "Thank God, that is over, for God says, 'He that believeth on Him is not condemned.'"

That was forty-two years ago. Let me tell you something more; in forty-two years, I have never *felt* saved; but for forty-two years I have felt happy to *know* that I am saved. I am not saved by my feeling, but I feel so good to know that I am saved, and I know it because God has said I am. Do you see the difference? Suppose that night I had had a wonderful rush of feeling. I would have said, "My, I feel so good, I know now I am a Christian." Then, maybe, the next morning I might have gotten up with a darkbrown taste in my mouth and a headache, and I would have said, "I guess it is all a mistake, I feel so miserable I do not believe I am saved at all." *Feelings have nothing to do with it.*

Two Pictures in Egypt

Go back in memory with me to Egypt. God said to the Israelites, "Take a lamb, slay it, and pour the blood in a basin. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood, and sprinkle the blood upon the lintel and the doorposts of the houses wherein you shall eat the lamb, for tonight I am going through the land of Egypt visiting judgment upon the firstborn, *but* when I see the blood, I will pass over you." What was it that secured the *safety* of the Israelites? They knew it was the blood on the lintel and the door-posts. What was it that gave them the *assurance* of their safety? It was the Word of the living God.

Here is an Israelite and he slays the lamb, pours the blood in the basin. He has his family around him reverently watching as he carries out the divine regulations. Now he puts the hyssop in the blood and sprinkles it upon the lintel and the door-posts and then he says, "I want you all to go inside." "But, father," one might say, "is there nothing else to do?" "Nothing else. Jehovah has said, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.' You go inside where you are sheltered by the blood." And in faith they enter the house; they take God at His word; they pass under the blood, and now the character of God stands between those people and the destroying angel. If God is true, the angel of wrath cannot reach them, because God has said, "When I see the blood, I will *pass over you*." Some one has suggested the following vivid illustration:

One can imagine some of those Israelites inside the house in

A Great Deal of Trepidation.

Perhaps there is a young man who is quite concerned.

Every little while a groan comes out of him and his sister says, "Aaron, what are you groaning about?" "O Rachel," he says, "you know I am not as good as I ought to be, and I am the object of the destroying angel. I am the

first-born and if he should come in here after all and put me to death, I do not feel ready to die.”

“But Aaron, my brother, whatever are you talking about? Don’t you remember that God has declared, ‘When I see the blood, I will pass over you’? Don’t you remember that the blood was sprinkled and we came beneath the blood-sprinkled door, and now the character of God comes between us and judgment? God could not permit the destroying angel to touch you without losing His character, for He has given His sacred Word.”

The boy answered, “O Rachel, when I listen to you, I feel better, *but* every little while I get thinking about this. I am an honest doubter. Of course, I know it is all true, *but* honestly I doubt it.”

Poor wretched fellow. He would be perfectly safe if he were under the blood. It was faith that put him there; *his feelings had nothing to do with his security.*

Go to another house.

Everybody is Bright and Happy

and standing around the Passover table, lifting their voices in songs of praise, and the loudest and happiest singer of them all is the firstborn son in the family.

One might say to him, “Look here, Hezekiah, I can’t understand how a man in your position can sing the way you are doing tonight. I should think you would be thoughtful and worried until the midnight hour is safely over.”

And Hezekiah would answer, “What are you talking about? I have a right to be happy, I am the object of Jehovah’s special care. I am the first-born, and it was for me the lamb was killed, it was for me the blood was sprinkled, and Jehovah has said, ‘When I see the blood, I will pass over you.’ I have perfect assurance that all is well, for I am resting on Jehovah’s word.”

“Oh,” you say, “do you think you are all right because you feel so happy?”

“Not that at all,” he answers; “*I feel so happy to know I am all right.*” That is God’s way!

We receive the witness of man, but the witness of God is greater. This is the witness, that which God has testified concerning His Son, “He that believeth on the Son of God—he that accepts the testimony of this Book—hath the witness in himself;” he has taken the Word into his own heart. That is why we read, “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.” The witness is not some emotional experience; it is not some happy feeling; it is the Word of God ministered to your soul in the power of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God brings it home to you, and you believe it,

and pass from death into life.

See the Other Side

These are solemn words. God grant that every “honest doubter” may realise the seriousness of them. “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. ”

You may say to me, “I am trying to believe.” Trying to believe *whom*? Suppose I tell you something and you look at me and say, “That is very interesting, and I am trying to believe it.” What do you mean, trying to believe *me*? Do you think I would lie to you, deceive you? “Well, no, I hope not. I am trying hard to believe you.” Well, if you have to try so hard to believe me, it shows that you think I am quite liable to be deceiving you and lying to you. And so, when a man says, “I am trying to believe,” he is making God a liar. You either believe God, or you reject the testimony He has given. If you believe, you have the witness; if you reject, you have made Him a liar. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ” This is the story of the Gospel; that is what is revealed in the Bible. God has given us a wonderful gift, eternal life. But you cannot get it apart from Jesus Christ. Every blessing that God has for you is wrapped up in Him, and so God presents His Son, and says to you, “Yield, accept Him, come unto Him, look to Him.” These are different terms used in Holy Scripture, but they all mean the same thing. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Lippen”

Being of Scotch extraction, I always greatly enjoy the broad Scotch translation of the New Testament. In that you will never find our English word, “believe,” but you will find the word “lippen.” For instance, John 3. 16 reads, “For God sae loved the warld as to gie His Son, the only-begotten Ane, that ilka ane wha lippens till Him sudna dee, but hae life for aye.” What does that word mean, the word “lippen”? It just means to trust your whole weight on a thing, trust it implicitly.

A Scotch minister was visiting a poor woman who was in great distress about her soul. She just could not seem to understand. By and by he left her, and on his way back to the manse he was troubled to think he had not been able to help her. He came to a bridge over a burn in front of the house, which he started to cross, going step by step very carefully with his buckthorn cane. An old Scotch woman called out, “Why Doctor Man, can ye no lippen the brig?” He laughed and waved his hand, and said to himself, “I have the word for my auld lady.” So he went back to the cottage. She opened the door and said, “O Doctor, you’ve come back again?”

He said, “I have the word for you now.”

“What is it, Doctor?”

“Can you no lippen to Jesus?”

“Oh, is it just to lippen to Him? Why, surely I can lippen to Him. He will never let me doon, will He?”

They bowed together, and she settled it. That is all God asks you to do. Believe the record He has given concerning Jesus; put your heart’s trust in Him. You may be assured that you have life eternal for “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the Son of God; that ye may *know* ”—not merely may hope, not just have a reasonable assurance, but full assurance—“that ye *have* eternal life. ”

I have no doubt I am addressing many people who have long wanted to be sure that their souls are safe. Let me say that, if you will just cast yourself in simple faith on the testimony God has given, you may rejoice in the knowledge of life eternal and forgiveness of sins. Trust Christ Jesus and His finished work upon the Cross. Do not call God’s integrity in question by doubting the record He has given.

“What must I do? has oft been asked,
Eternal life to gain,
Man anxious seems for any task
If this he may obtain;
But all the doing has been done ,
As God has clearly shown,
When by the offering of His Son,
His purpose He made known.”

CHAPTER V

Perfect Love

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4. 17).

THESE verses troubled me for some six years after I was converted more than anything else in the Bible, excepting one verse from the Epistle to the Hebrews, which isn't there at all! The verse I imagined was in Hebrews caused me many sleepless nights, and much soul anxiety. I had often heard it quoted and I was so impressed with its importance that I had it painted on a banner to hang up behind me almost every place I went, for I was sure it was God's Word, and I believed it, even though it caused me a lot of trouble. I shall never forget how amazed I was when at last I found that it wasn't in the Bible. I had heard great sermons preached on it, and I even preached on it frequently myself.

The text was, “WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD.” I was absolutely certain that it was in the Book, and I had been told that holiness was a second definite work of grace subsequent to justification, an experience of inward cleansing whereby all Adamic sin was eliminated from one's being; and that unless one obtained this experience of holiness here on earth, no matter whether he had been regenerated, justified, and enjoyed much of Christ, he would never see the Lord after all.

I used to tremble sometimes as one old friend of mine preached with terrific intensity on the startling topic,

“Holiness or Hell!”

He insisted that if we did not get all inbred sin purged out of us while in this life, so that we were absolutely holy in thought, word, and deed, we would be lost eventually in spite of any Christian experience we had enjoyed. Again and again I sought the Lord in earnestness of spirit, pleading with Him to root out all the sin from my heart. I told Him I would do, be, or go, whatever and wherever He would have me, and I claimed the blessing by a faith, which I now know was presumption, and tried to keep on claiming it even when I was greatly distressed by the fear that the claim had no foundation in fact. For, while I would go on well for a little time, eventually something would always go wrong, and I would have to start all over again seeking the experience of holiness. Moreover, I saw that people with whom I associated were all in the same boat as myself. No one's “sanctification” lasted very

long, but all broke down from time to time, yet I could not believe that the trouble was in the text, or in my understanding of it. I felt it must be in myself. Surely my consecration was not complete, or I would attain to the blessedness of sinless perfection.

I can scarcely describe my astonishment when after six years of this dreadful uncertainty, I sat down one day to thoughtfully peruse Hebrews 12, and when I came to verse 14, I could hardly believe my own eyes as I read, "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." In a moment the light broke. I said to myself, "Dear me, that is what I have been doing ever since I was converted. It has been the earnest desire of my heart to be at *peace* with all men, and to walk in *holiness*. But if you follow holiness you certainly haven't caught up with it."

I am sure you can see how different the actual text is to that which I had imagined. The bare statement, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" had conveyed an utterly wrong thought to my mind, whereas the exhortation to "follow holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" simply tests the reality of one's profession of a new birth, for every truly born again person delights in holiness and follows after it, even though conscious of the fact that he has not yet attained to it in the absolute sense.

"Without Peace No Man——"

Take the other part of the verse. Suppose one were to say, "Without peace with all men no man shall see the Lord. "Why, I have been following peace for forty-two years, but I am not at peace with all men yet. Many of them won't let me be at peace with them no matter how earnestly I seek it. But it is my ideal; I have no desire to wound and injure people, nor needlessly to enter into conflict with them. I delight in peace as every true Christian should. But it is very plain that you have not caught up with something which you are following. And on the other hand, a man who does not follow after peace and holiness, whatever his profession is, just to that extent he is a hypocrite.

Which of my hearers can say he is absolutely holy in the flesh?

I heard a man make the statement in a meeting many years ago, "I want you to know that I am as holy as Jesus Christ was!" Two days later the police broke into his house in response to his wife's screams, just in time to save her from being beheaded, as he sought to kill her with an axe. Of course, the poor fellow was demented, and he died in an insane asylum shortly afterwards. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. "The most devoted saint has no holiness in the flesh. But our standing is another thing altogether; we are seen by God as holy in Christ. God hath made Him to be unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification (or holiness), and redemption.

“Love Made Perfect”

But now I want to examine with some degree of care the verses which I have read as a text for this discourse. They used to trouble me greatly. I simply could not understand them. I knew I had been born of God. I was sure His Spirit dwelt within me; I yearned for greater fellowship with Himself. I loved His Word, and I delighted in declaring the Gospel (so far as I then understood it) to others. But these verses distressed me terribly. I would say to myself, as I read them, “Herein is our love made perfect, but my love is not made perfect. My love is very imperfect. There is a great deal of selfishness connected with it. I am often very inconsiderate; I am frequently thoughtless about the comfort and happiness of others, and think more of ministering to my own pleasure. If my love were perfect this would never be. I would always think of others first, and of God and of Christ, and not of myself at all. But the verse says, ‘Our love is made perfect,’ and boldness in the Day of Judgment seems to hang upon this.”

Oh, the agony I went through as I looked forward to that Day of Judgment! What if, after all I had known and enjoyed of Christ, that Day of doom simply brought out the fact that my love was still so imperfect there could be no heaven for me!

I did not understand the Christian’s relation to judgment, of which I shall speak later. I knew that Christ had died for my sins, and that through faith in Him my soul was saved. But I thought of the Christian life as a probation and that the final test was to be made in the Judgment Day, as to whether I should go to Heaven or Hell. How could I then have boldness in the Day of Judgment, when my personal experience was so unsatisfactory?

The last part of the verse was even more perplexing, “Because as He is, so are we in this world.” The words were simple enough. Nine monosyllables, but who could claim to have attained to such perfection as this? I said to myself, “I am not as He is, not yet, at all events. I am not as holy as He is; I am not as righteous as He is; I am not as true as He is; I am not as faithful as He is; I am not as compassionate and thoughtful of others as He is. How then can I say, ‘As He is so am I in this world?’”

Then the next verse declares, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” “Ah, “I said to myself, “if I could only attain to this blissful condition where I would be perfect in love, then all this torment and fear would disappear. But that is just the trouble with me. I am not yet perfect in love. I still have fear; fear does torment, and I do not see how I can ever have settled peace until I attain this greatly to be desired experience of perfect love.”

I wonder how many who are listening to me tonight have gone through a

similar time of perplexity and anxiety. I wonder if there are any who are going through it now. If you are, I beg you follow me most carefully as I seek to show you

How I Found Deliverance.

First let me remark that although I have tried to read my Bible regularly all my life, I have to confess I have often read it very carelessly. For instance until about the same time as the revelation came to me concerning the Hebrews passage, I had never noticed the marginal emendation in connection with 1 John 4. 17, "Herein is love with us made perfect. "“Love with us!” What does it mean? It certainly does not mean that our own love is perfect, but it speaks of a love in which we share. I was startled and thrilled. I looked it up in some more critical versions, and I found that the real meaning of the passage was this, "Herein has love been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment, that even as He is we also are in this world." It seemed that everything was clearing in a moment. I saw that for six years I had been looking for perfect love in the wrong man. God, by the Spirit, seemed to say to me, "Perfect love is in another Man, the Man Christ Jesus, and in that Man for you." And then I noticed the connective "*herein*." This, of course, is intended to direct our minds to something that has been written before, and so I glanced back in the chapter, and, oh, what precious things I found! "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins" (vv. 9, 10). Here indeed is perfect love, and that in all its fulness. It is God's love to me manifested in the Mediator between God and man, our Lord Jesus Christ. It was love that gave Him, and notice the double nature or character of the gift.

Because we were dead in trespasses and in sins, God in His infinite love sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Because we were guilty and defiled by sin, God sent His Son to make expiation for our iniquity. Thus we have everything in Christ, and Christ is everything to the believer for time and eternity. God's love is seen in all its fulness in the work of the Cross. Herein has love been perfected with us. And so we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment. If God sent His Son to be the propitiation for my sins, I need not now fear the Judgment, because the Lord Jesus has already gone into judgment for me. He took my place, He paid my debt, and delivered me from every claim of the outraged throne of God.

"By faith the Lamb of God I see
Expiring on the Cross for me;

He paid the mighty debt I owe,
He died because He loved me so.

“For me the Father sent His Son,
For me the victory He won;
To save my soul from endless woe,
He died because He loved me so.”

This indeed gives boldness in view of the Judgment Day. For when that last dread hour arrives, my case is not coming up. It was all settled nineteen hundred years ago, and settled to the divine satisfaction.

No Fear of Law

Suppose I am passing a court-house, and I see a group of manacled men entering under guard of a police platoon. I inquire of someone standing by as to what is going on, and I learn that a number of desperate criminals are to come up for trial. I decide to go in and hear some of the evidence, but as I am about to enter someone says to me, “Are you not afraid to go in there? Do you not realise that these men are likely to be condemned to penal servitude, or possibly to death? Are you not afraid to be in that company?”

I answer, “Not at all; I am not on trial; the law has nothing against me; I simply go in as a spectator. “

You see I would have boldness in the day of Judgment. And so in regard to the last great Assize; perfect love has cast out all fear.

“He bare on the tree the sentence for me,
And now both the Surety and sinner are free;
And this I shall find we too are so joined,
He will not be in glory and leave me behind.”

He is in Heaven now as my representative, and I am accepted in Him. And so we read, “As He is so are we in this world.” Perfect love has given me His place now before God. It is not a question of my likeness to Christ morally, while I seek by grace to become more and more like Him, but I am always conscious of my short-coming. Yet I know that I am as He is in relation to the question of judgment.

What a wealth of meaning is found in these nine monosyllables. God wrapped up one of the profoundest truths of Scripture in a child’s sentence of one syllable words. Sometimes, when we who try to preach, want to impress people with the profundity of our thoughts, we strike an attitude, attempt to look very profound, and draw on the dictionary for all the big words we can find with which to cover up the real poverty of our thought. But God uses the simplest words to express the greatest truths. Who would have believed it had He not Himself declared it? That as Christ is so are we even in this world, if we have put our trust in Him. He has made us accepted

in the Beloved. Is it not wonderful? Do you believe it? If you do, I know that all fear is driven out, for He that feareth is not made perfect in love. To be made perfect in love is to have learned the lesson that the Holy Spirit is here seeking to teach us.

The Latin Test

Think of a group of young people who are to have a Latin test in school. For days prior to the examination you see most of them going about with a Latin Grammar under their noses, conjugating verbs, and trying to fill their minds with Latin phrases. They are desperately afraid of failure. Why? Because they are not made perfect in Latin. But see that bright young girl walking across the campus with tennis shoes on, and a tennis racket in hand. Some one calls out and says, "Where are you going? Don't you know there is a Latin test coming?"

She answers, "Oh, yes, I know all about that, but I am going out to play, for I know my lesson, and I have no fear of the test."

And so, if our hearts have really taken in the truth that this wonderful chapter was intended to teach us, all fear and dread of the Judgment will disappear, and we shall be able to look forward to it with perfect equanimity, knowing that we are one with Him who shall sit upon that throne.

Now the moral result of it all comes out in the closing verse of the text, which is literally, "We love because He first loved us." It is true that we love Him, but the editors generally omit the pronoun. Some of you may feel that you are losing something by leaving it out. But think a moment, and you will see that you are really gaining. For it is not only that we love Him, but we love His. We love all for whom He died. His perfect love is now shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us, and we love because He first loved us.

The Prisoner's Purpose

Let me close with an incident, which I read in a Christian periodical some time ago. In a large penitentiary there was a Christian guard who was deeply interested in the welfare of the men he was set to watch. During a certain part of the year, it was his duty to take a group of men fettered hand and foot, down to the river-side where they were loaded aboard a boat and taken across the stream, and put to work breaking stone on the road. As he was escorting his squad one morning, he noticed in the rear of the line an old man who had spent almost an ordinary lifetime behind grey walls. The guard suddenly remembered that the aged convict's time was nearly up, and he was soon to be discharged. He stepped back and walked along with him to the river, inquiring concerning his expectations when he should return to the world outside. He learned that the old man did not have a friend to whom he could

go. All who had ever been interested in him had died long since. Asked what he expected to do when he got back into the world, the old man looked at him with eyes blazing with hatred and said, "One of the first things I intend to do is

To Kill a Policeman."

"Why," exclaimed the guard, "that is a very foolish thing to do. What do you want to kill a policeman for?"

"I am going to kill the policeman that swore my liberty away and put me here. I have done time often for crimes I committed, but this time I have been here for ten years for a crime I never committed, and I have been nursing the desire for revenge all through the years. Now I am eager for the moment when I can kill the man that put me here."

The guard asked, "Have you thought of the consequences? What will happen after you kill the policeman?"

"Oh, I will be arrested again, and taken to jail."

"And after that?"

"Well, I will go to trial, and I suppose they will send me back to the penitentiary."

"And after that?"

"Oh, well, I will have to hang for it."

"And after that?"

The man shifted uneasily, but said, "Oh, I know what you mean; but there cannot be any worse Hell than I have lived in all these years."

The heart of the guard was deeply moved, and he silently looked up to God, praying that he might be able to say the right thing and give a message that would reach this hardened, desperate criminal. Then he asked him, "Do you have a Bible in your cell?" The man admitted that he did. "Have you read it?"

"Yes, I have read it through several times. It has helped me to pass the hours away."

"Did you ever read this in your Bible, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?'"

"No," he exclaimed, "I have never read that. That isn't in my Bible. God doesn't love this world, and He hates sinners like me."

"Will you do something for me?"

"Yes, I will if I can. You are the one man that said a kind word to me in ten years. I will do anything I can for you."

"When you go home tonight, will you take your Bible, and turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 3, verse 16, and tell me tomorrow what you found there?"

He readily promised, and the guard left him, committing the case to the Lord.

The next day as the little squad gathered together to go down to the river, the old man came from his cell with

A Strange Light in His Eyes,

and the look upon his face was such as had never been seen before. When opportunity presented itself, the guard slipped over to him, and asked quietly, “Did you look up that verse? “

“Yes, I did,” was the reply, “I could hardly believe it as I read it. It was just as you said. I have read it over and over, and oh, sir, it seems too good to be true, that ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ I have been reading it over, and thinking about it all night long. Oh, sir, if God has loved *me* like that I cannot fight against Him any more. I have taken Christ to be *my* Saviour. “

The guard grasped his hand while tears of joy flowed down both their faces, and then the aged convict leaned over and said in low tones, “Do you know, sir, something has happened. I don’t want to kill the policeman. I wish I could find him and throw my arms around him and tell him that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. “

Yes, this is the effect of the love of God when the Gospel message is believed. “We love because He first loved us. “

“His is love, ‘tis love unbounded,
Without measure, without end;
Human thought is here confounded,
‘Tis too vast to comprehend.
Praise the Saviour,
Magnify the sinner’s Friend.”

CHAPTER VI

The Garden of Gethsemane

“And He went a little further and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39).

THIS is the heart of a section or paragraph which includes verses 36 to 46. Read it thoughtfully, and let the poignancy of it all enter into your very soul. It seems to me that when we come to the consideration of such a scene as this, bringing before us one of the most solemn hours, not only in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, but in the history of the universe, we may well put away every light and frivolous thought, and, as it were, draw our shoes from off our feet as we peer beneath the olive trees in a spirit of reverence, realising that we are indeed upon holy ground.

It is ours to contemplate the agony of soul that the Holy Son of God passed through as He looked forward to that hour for which He had come into the world, when He, the sinless One, should be made sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

It seems most suggestive that the Holy Spirit should have preserved the name of the garden where this event occurred. GETHSEMANE means

“The Oil Press,”

the place where the olives were crushed, and the golden oil expelled from them. How aptly it speaks of the casting of our Holy Saviour into the awful press of divine judgment against sin, that blessing for guilty men might flow forth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Garden was well-known to His disciples, for often the Lord had gone there to pray, and now they accompanied Him in a body as far as the entrance at least, and three of them went farther in sharing in some measure the sorrows which they could but dimly apprehend. He delighted in the companionship of those who understood, those who could enter sympathetically into His feelings. This but emphasises the perfection of His humanity, for He was a real Man, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. We can never say too often that He was truly God, but He was just as truly man, and as we follow Him here in the Garden, it is of His humanity we especially think. And because He was a holy man, the only absolutely holy Man who ever trod this earth, His spirit shrank from the fearful ordeal of drinking the cup of divine judgment upon the Cross. He would not have been the Holy Son; His humanity would not have been perfect, if He could have attempted such a thing with equanimity. Because He was truly Man and

yet God, His whole being was agonised as He thought of taking the sinner's place and enduring the hiding of God's face.

He yearned for friendly understanding. We seem to hear Him saying as in the words of the Psalm, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psa. 69. 20). There was no one who really understood. And if in any measure we understand now, it is only because of the enlightenment of the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, for left to ourselves His sufferings would be incomprehensible to our mortal minds, and we would be as unfeeling and as insensate as many were when He was here on earth.

He yearned to have His disciples enter with Him in some sense into the hour of His soul's distress. If unable to do anything else, at least they could pray. So He took with Him three,

Peter, James, and John,

the three with whom He had deeper fellowship than with the rest; the three who were with Him when He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; the three who saw His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was John and James who wanted to sit the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in the Kingdom. It was Peter, who had said just a little time before, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I forsake Thee." He took these three farther into the Garden, then bidding them watch and pray, He went a little farther yet to be alone with His Father. Can you see the three different groups? The eight disciples are yonder, the three here, and the blessed Lord a little farther on alone with God the Father. Someone has likened it to the Court, Holy Place, and Holy of Holies in the tabernacle or temple of old.

There as He bowed in prayer, He began to be sorrowful and very heavy. The words have been translated by another, "deeply distressed." At first thought, we might shrink from applying this to Him, but if so, it would only show how little we understood the reality of His humanity. As the perfect Man, He was deeply distressed when He contemplated what it would really mean to Him to be the sinner's Saviour. We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. He was always perfect as to His character, but it was only through suffering He could become Captain of our salvation. And in view of the Cross, this deep depression settled down upon His soul. "Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me, and He went a little further."

That expression, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful" emphasises for us the fact that He had a truly human soul as well as a human body. It was not as some have supposed, that the divine logos, "word," took the place in His body that the soul has in ours. Had it been so, He would not have been truly

man. He possessed a human *spirit*, and a human *soul*, and a human *body*. He gave up His body to death; His soul was exceeding sorrowful, and later on we read that He dismissed His spirit to the Father.

“Exceeding Sorrowful”

The words really mean “overwhelmed with sorrow.” It was like a great river breaking over His soul. He could cry, “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over Me.” In His agony he prayed, “Oh, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.”

I am afraid a great many foolish, very unscriptural things have been suggested as explaining the meaning of the cup.

I remember hearing one who should have known better declare that the cup from which He shrank was insanity. It was suggested that He was fearful that His mind would give way beneath His awful suffering, and so He would go to the Cross an insane man and thus defeat the very purpose for which He came into the world, for an insane man could not voluntarily yield Himself a sacrifice on behalf of sinners.

Others have suggested that the cup was the fear of death; that He was afraid that Satan might kill Him there in the Garden and so hinder His fulfilling the Scripture which declared “He should be lifted up on the Cross to die.”

Those holding both views were very insistent that it was unthinkable that He should offer a prayer that would not be answered. Consequently the cup must have passed, but this does not at all follow. He did not exactly ask that the cup should pass. The words, “If it be possible” qualified His request, and the added expression of submission “Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” qualified it still more. We do not have here a conflict of wills. It is not that the will of the man Christ Jesus was in conflict with the will of God the Father. But it is as if He said, “My Father, while I am perfectly resigned to do Thy will in all things; I came into the world for that purpose; while I would never think for one moment of turning aside from the Cross with its shame and agony, in order to redeem a lost world; yet if there is any other way by which this can be accomplished; any other plan hidden that could now be made known, reveal it.”

It was as Abraham going to the mountain top with his son. He bound him and laid him upon the altar, and yet in his heart hoped that God had some other plan in order that His beloved son might not die. And sure enough, just at the very moment ere the death stroke was inflicted, the voice of the Lord was heard calling to stay his hand, and he beheld caught in the thicket, a ram that was to take the place of the son upon that altar. This is a wonderful Old Testament picture, the nearest to the work of the Cross, that we have in the

Bible until that work became an accomplished fact.

The cup then from which our Lord drank was that of

Being Made Sin For Us.

It is written, "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them" (Psa. 75:8). The cup that our sins had filled, the cup of the divine indignation against iniquity, which we had deserved, was to be pressed to His lips. And this involved His taking the sinner's place, and being treated by God as though He were Himself the guilty one.

How could He do other than shrink in agony from such an experience, while yet in all things subject to the Father's will. How touching His cry, "O my Father!" Mark tells us He said, "ABBA, FATHER." Each Gospel throws some different light upon it, and they should all be read together in order to get the full view. Abba, is Aramaic. It is a word for baby lips. It was to the Hebrews what the word "Papa" is to us. The Greek word translated "father," while related linguistically, is a word for older children to say. Abba was the word that Jesus had used as a little child in His home in Nazareth, and now in the hour of His bitter passion, He reverted to it. He who had strengthened others in their weakness and comforted them in their sorrow, was now bowed in weakness and sorrow, as He lifted up His heart to His Father, seeking a way out if such could be His will.

But there was no hint of rebellion, not one suggestion of insubjection. He had said long before, "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," and so now He exclaims, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And, rising, He was refreshed in measure at least, because of the fact that an angel came and ministered unto Him as Luke tells us. What a mystery is here! An angel created by Him ministering to the Lord of angels!

He arose and went back to the trio whom He had left to pray. But He found them

Sleeping for Sorrow.

They were not utterly indifferent. Their spirits were evidently distressed, but the trouble was they could not understand and their very grief caused them to be overcome with drowsiness. Awakening them, He said to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation."

Think of it, Peter, the one who had made such ardent protestations, the one who was so self-confident, now in the very beginning of the struggle could not be depended upon any more than the rest; and is he not but a picture of the rest of us? We are often so very self-confident, and yet so very

unreliable. Our Lord added the words, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” What a gracious recognition of their condition. It was as though He said, “I know that you truly love Me; I know that you desire to watch with Me, but I recognise your physical weakness, and your mental inability to understand My sorrows.” He realised that their very grief had worn them out, because they could not explain it to themselves.

He went away the second time, and now we do not find quite the same agony. His spirit seems to be more serene. He had accepted the cup, and He said, “My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.” Let me again emphasise the solemn truth that the cup was not the mere fact of dying. If that were so, many a martyr has shown greater fortitude than He, when facing the stake. But it was *dying under the judgment of a holy God*. It was bearing the wrath that sin deserved; that was to Him terrible. The cry that was wrung from His lips as He hung upon the Cross and the darkness was passing, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me”? explains the cup as nothing else can. How could the eternal Son become flesh, do other than shrink from so dreadful an ordeal?

Oh, Christless soul, can you not see in this something of what your sins cost the Son of God? Does it not make you realise as nothing else could how wicked a thing it is to turn away from such a Saviour? Can you not understand now why God must shut away in the darkness all who spurn such wondrous grace? Could anything tell out with more fearful eloquence the incorrigible evil of the human heart, than that one could be familiar with all this wondrous story of love and yet indifferent to it? And what can depict the horrors of a lost eternity more vividly than the Saviour’s cries of agony both here in Gethsemane, and later on Golgotha’s Cross. Here it is anticipation; there it was realization.

But let us follow the holy Sufferer a little more carefully. A second time He arose from His knees, and walked back to the place where He had left His three loved companions. But again He found them asleep, we read, “for

Their Eyes Were Heavy.”

And so “He left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.”

If we would better understand the inward experiences He was passing through we should read the one hundred and second Psalm, the Psalm which is entitled, “A Prayer of the afflicted when he is *overwhelmed*, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.” Some one has said that the strings of the harp of David were the cords of the heart of Jesus, and here we may follow the cry of His inmost soul as He spread out His cause before the LORD, when He could say, “I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled My drink with weeping, Because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath: for Thou hast lifted

Me up and cast Me down” (verses 9, 10). But even in that hour of distress His confidence was in God who answered Him according to the love of His heart, and the holiness of His nature. And so the agony ended in perfect composure of spirit. *He prepared to go forth to die.*

As one who was already a conqueror, He went out to put death and judgment beneath His feet by enduring that death and judgment Himself. But first He came once more to His disciples, and pitifully looked upon them as they lay there asleep again. And here, if we follow our Authorised Version, we read that He said something that it is difficult to explain. “Sleep on now, and take your rest.” But that does not seem to be fitting in view of what immediately follows: “Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold he is at hand that doth betray Me.”

How can we harmonise “Sleep on now and take your rest” with “Rise, let us be going”? The passage is admittedly a perplexing one, but there are two very ready explanations. Some translators have put it in the form of a question. What He may have said was this, “Sleeping still, and taking a rest? Rise, let us be going.” It would thus be a question of inflection simply as though He said, “Still asleep after I have awakened you twice; rise, let us be going.” Or it might be paraphrased, “You are sleeping what time remaineth, and taking your rest; I have been through this period of bitter agony and you, you are sleeping!” What a rebuke that was, and how well we may take it to heart.

Our blessed Lord was not exactly bearing sin in the Garden, as some people have supposed. It was not that He drank the cup concerning which He prayed to His Father. He was there looking forward to the hour when He was to be made sin for us.

It Was on the Cross

that He drank the cup; it was there He paid the debt we owed; it was there He made propitiation for our sins. But oh, how much this Garden scene opens up to us; how vividly it brings before us the perfection of His humanity; how it emphasises the horrors of that Cross.

“Death and the curse were in our cup,
Oh, Christ, ‘twas full for Thee;
But Thou hast drained the last dark drop,
‘Tis empty now for me.
That bitter cup, love drank it up,
Now blessing’s draft for me.

“The Holy One did hide His face,
Oh, Christ, ‘twas hid from Thee;

Dumb darkness wrapped Thy soul a space,
The darkness due to me.
But now that Face of radiant grace
Shines forth in light on me.”

It was this that made atonement; the pouring out of His soul unto death; the enduring of that divine wrath from which He shrank in the Garden.

And yet He had foreseen it all. It was for this very thing He had come into the world, saying to the Father, “Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book, it is written of Me, to do Thy will, oh, My God.” It was to this He pledged Himself in His baptism in the Jordan. It was of this He spake again and again to His disciples when He declared He had come to give His life a ransom for many, and that the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

And just before He went out to the Garden He had gathered His disciples about Him in the upper room, and there presided at the Passover Feast with them, and then at the close of that feast, He had

Instituted Another Memorial.

The Passover was the reminder of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. But He instituted the Lord’s Supper, the memorial of our salvation from a greater than Egypt’s bondage; of our deliverance from far worse than any temporal judgment through His sacrificial death. How vividly He portrayed it all when He took the bread after He had given thanks, and break it, saying, “Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you; this do for the calling of Me to mind.” What must have been His feelings as He held the testimonial cup in His hand, and presented it to His disciples saying, “This cup is the New Testament in My Blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins; this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me.” How strikingly it all shows that nothing took Him by surprise. Everything moved on in exact accord with the purpose for which He came into the world.

The centuries have rolled by since these things were done, and untold millions have been saved through His sufferings, and still today the Gospel goes out to a lost world, calling men and women everywhere to bow in penitence before His feet and own their guilt, and trust His grace. Every celebration of the Lord’s Supper is an acted sermon, for we read, “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do *show the Lord’s death* till He come.” The word translated “show” might just as well be rendered “proclaim” or “preach.” This holy feast is a divine proclamation of the only way of life and salvation for lost and ruined sinners.

“Only bread and only wine,
Yet to faith the solemn sign

Of the Heavenly and divine.
We give Thee thanks, O Lord.”

Have you trusted Him? Does your soul adore Him for what He in grace went through for your redemption? Do you say, “But I feel so utterly unworthy?” It is well that you should. If you felt worthy it would be a most wretched state of spiritual pride, for none of us have any worthiness in ourselves. But the Lamb in the midst of the Throne is worthy, and it is because of His worthiness that God can accept repentant sinners and put away all their guilt.

Do you say, “But there are sins that rise before me which I try to forget but cannot?” He says, “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

“The Blood Counts for Something”

A friend of mine, himself an evangelist, lay for many weary months in a Roman Catholic hospital in the city of Oakland, California, because of injuries received in an automobile accident. On a nearby bed lay a young priest, evidently a sincere and earnest man, but he was greatly troubled in view of possible death. An aged priest came from time to time to hear his confessions, and to grant him absolution. My friend longed to speak to him, but found him very difficult to approach. One day, however, as the older priest was about to leave he overheard the young one say to him, something like this, “Father, it is very strange; I have done everything I know to do. I have sought to carry out all that the church has asked, and yet I have no peace. How can I be sure that God has put away my sins?” The other looked at him compassionately, and then exclaimed, “*Surely the Blood of Christ ought to count for something!*” As though a flash of divine light had entered his soul, the young priest’s countenance changed. He looked up eagerly to exclaim, “Ah, yes, it counts for everything. I can trust that.”

And it was evident afterwards that his soul had entered into peace. Can you trust the precious Blood shed by that Holy Son, who drank the cup of judgment for your sins upon the Cross? If so, God declares “YOUR SINS WHICH WERE MANY ARE ALL FORGIVEN.”

Thus, redeemed to God and justified, you will enter as never before into the inner meaning of the Garden and the Cross.

“Gethsemane can I forget,
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and blood-like sweat,
And not remember Thee?

“When to the Cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary,

O Lamb of God, my sacrifice,
I must remember Thee.”

CHAPTER VII

The Cross of Christ

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I was determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And 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” (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

THE second verse is that upon which I especially wish to base my remarks, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.”

There are those who have taught that the Apostle Paul, in using these words, had in mind his address on Mars’ Hill in Athens, where, according to some, he had departed a little from this specific message, but that disheartened over the result, in going to Corinth, he had changed his programme, and he was determined henceforth to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

They may be right, but personally, I see no reason to believe they are correct. It seems to me that he is setting forth here that which had been the sum and

Substance of All His Preaching

from the time that God first saved Him. He tells us how he sought to be made all things to all men if by any means he might save some.

When he addressed the JEWS as a Jew that he might gain the Jews, still he knew nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When to the GREEKS he became a Greek, in order that he might gain the Greeks, he knew nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When to the men of CULTURE he spake, as a man of the schools, and referred them to their own poets, the authorities that they recognised, in order that he might press his message home upon them, he actually knew nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When he came down to the cruder level of the UNCULTURED, and talked to them in terms that they could readily apprehend, of rain from Heaven and fruitful seasons, as the expression of the great heart of God, yet he knew nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

As he stood there on Mars’ Hill with those philosophers gathered about him, and showed them that he was just as familiar with their philosophies as they were, that he had read their poets, that he was acquainted with their

literature, even while he used all that as a preamble to lead to his great theme, when he came to the crux of the whole matter, it was that “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a Day in the 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 that raised Him from the dead.” That was the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

So I take it, not that the Apostle is here looking back regretting the blunders of the past and determining that henceforth he would be more faithful, but rather that he was presenting what had been the matter and character of his preaching throughout the years, and he did not intend to change it in Corinth, but would continue with the only message that God has ever promised to bless, the only message that ever will be blessed to the salvation of lost sinners and the upbuilding of saints.

He tells us,

“The Preaching of the Cross

is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” In that he suggests that the message of the Cross has one character as presented to the world, and another character as apprehended by the people of God. It is this message of the Cross, this scandal of the Cross, of which he speaks in Galatians. But what does he really mean by that?

We speak so lightly of the Cross today, and have become so accustomed to hearing about it, that we fail sometimes to recognise what was really involved in that message in the day that Paul evangelized the ancient world proclaiming the Gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour. The Cross then was not an ornament to be worn on a chain; it was not a sign to be placed above some church building. The Cross was the symbol of deepest shame and ignominy; it spoke of an accursed death as do the gallows and the electric chair today.

Cicero, that great Roman orator, always concerned about the refinements of speech said, “*The Cross!* It is so shameful, it should never even be mentioned in polite society.” Just as today if you were in a company, and knew of some one present who had a friend or relative, who had committed so serious a crime that the poor wretch had been sentenced to death on the gallows or the electric chair, how careful you would be not to mention either at such a time! You would not want to say anything that might suggest the dreadful shame, the awful ignominy of such a death. That was the way men felt about the Cross, when the Apostle Paul wrote, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

The Necessity of the Cross

The life of Jesus was not enough; the character of Jesus would not do. Paul well knew that the life of Jesus apart from His ignominious death would never have saved one poor sinner. There are those today who say to us, it is not the *death* of Christ we are concerned about; it is the wonderful *example*, the *teaching*, the *instruction* of Jesus that saves and uplifts the race. But we might preach the example of Jesus; we might praise the philosophy of Christ, the advice and instruction He gave as to living, and yet if we left out the suffering of the Cross, our message would be absolutely powerless so far as the salvation of sinners is concerned. Men may use honeyed words as they speak of His incomparable life, and they may profess to admire greatly His ethical teaching, but they shrink from the implication of the mention of the Cross, and yet we are told, “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

The Unbeliever and the Cross

What message does the Cross bring to the unbeliever? In the first place it emphasises the incorrigible evil of the heart of man. It was not absolutely necessary that Jesus should die *on a Cross* in order to make atonement for sin. Do not misunderstand me; it was necessary that Jesus should die to make atonement; it was necessary that that holy spotless life of His should be given up on our behalf; it was necessary that He should pour forth His precious Blood; but, the Cross was not in itself ordained of God as the means of salvation for sinners. There was no merit in the wood.

There is a difference between God’s foreordination and God’s acceptance of what He foresaw. He knew what man would do to His Son, and He made that the occasion of the display of His grace. It was all predicted beforehand. The Cross was accepted by God when man had nailed His Son thereon and thereby expressed in all its fulness *the incurable wickedness of his wretched heart*.

Peter, standing up on the day of Pentecost, drove home to them their guilt, when he said, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Oh yes, God knew they would do it when He gave His Son to come into the world, to leave the glories of Heaven; He knew to what death His Son was going forth. God sent Him into the world to give His life for our redemption. But this is the guilt of mankind, that God in love having sent His Son, the Son in love having come to settle the sin question, man said, “We will give Him the worst death, the most shameful death to which it is possible to subject a malefactor.” So they led Him outside the city of Jerusalem, and

nailed Him to a Cross.

I say it reverently; He might have poured out His soul unto death in Gethsemane, if the Scripture had not foretold the manner of His sacrifice. He might have shed His blood in some other way if it had pleased God to permit it, but God waited until man had done the very worst that he could do, and then He said, "I am going to do the very best I can do." Man could do nothing worse than to nail Him to the Cross, and as He hung there, God said, "I will make the Cross—the symbol of ignominy and shame—to be the great altar upon which the true sin offering is offered up for the sin of the world," and so the Cross is in the first instance the full expression of the wickedness of man's heart. Of course all this was foreknown and predicted, but it does not lessen man's responsibility.

But what I want you to see is, the merit was not in the cross of wood, the cruel nails, the thorny crown, or the piercing of the Saviour's side. The merit was all His own! It was His life given up, His blood shed, that purchased redemption. God saw from all eternity just how this would take place, as the expression of the foul malignity of Satan, and of Satan-controlled men.

God's Love and the Cross

In the second place, it is the full expression of the infinite love of God to guilty man. Do not think that if you had been there, you would not have joined with that throng; do not think that your heart is any different from the hearts of those who cried, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Remember it is written in the Word, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." If you want to know exactly what your heart is, apart from divine grace, follow that multitude as they demand the death of the Son of God. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" asked Pontius Pilate, and the awful answer came ringing back, "Let Him be crucified!" That tells what man is; that shows up the corruption, the vileness, the iniquity of man's heart. He would go to the length of murdering God Himself if he could, in order to have his own way in this world. So when man had challenged God by hurling back the Blood of His Son in His face, saying, "We don't want Him; we reject His instruction," God said, "I will make Him the sacrifice, and through His blood, and that alone, you may be saved."

The Cross was the means by which peace was made, "Having made peace through the Blood of His Cross." God has shut man up to this: "You have accounted my Son worthy of nothing but a Cross; if you are ever saved, you will mount that Cross with Him in faith." That is what led the Apostle Paul to cry as he does in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, *who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" You see there upon that Cross the sinless One made sin that

we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

“The Holy One who knew no sin,
God made Him sin for us;
The Saviour died our souls to win
Upon that cruel Cross.”

Now when we put our heart’s trust in Him, we can see how in the Cross “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10). We have peace with God through the work that our blessed Lord accomplished on the Cross.

Christians and the Cross

The Cross not only had its message for the world, but the Cross has a message for the people of God. Let us not think of the Cross simply as the means whereby God is enabled to be “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, “ but the Cross now is presented to the believer as the test for his whole life.

In the first place, we see in the devotion of our Lord Jesus the pattern of humility, which you and I, as redeemed ones are called upon to follow. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). Men talk about Jesus as our example, and He was our example, not as sinners, but as *saints*. Peter says, “He left us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a Man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” Or, perhaps, literally, “He became obedient unto death, and such a death—that of the Cross.” There you have the humiliation of the Son of God, and you and I are called to follow His steps.

We sing sometimes, “I’ll go with Him up to Calvary, I’ll go with Him all the way,” and after all that is what we are called to do—to manifest the same spirit that He manifested, as we go after Him, and bear our cross. He laid down His life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Do not talk about trusting in the Cross of Christ for salvation, if you shrink from practical participation in that of which the Cross speaks in daily life.

The Flesh and the Cross

Then, too, the Cross is for the believer the sign of deliverance from the power of the flesh, of the death of the old man. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). “And they that are Christ’s

have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). What does that mean, “Our old man is crucified with Him?” What is our old man? Some people think it is synonymous with our old nature, but it goes deeper than that; it is the man of old, all that you and I used to be in our unconverted state; the man that I once was. The man of old I see now crucified with Christ; that man has come to an end; that man has been nailed to a Cross, and I accept God’s testimony, and have crucified the flesh.

But you remember how they stood at the foot of the Cross and said, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross,” and how often self-interests lead us to look back at our old man, and say, “Come down; come and enjoy a little of the things that you once enjoyed; indulge in the things which you once loved.” But no, faith says, “That man is gone, he has come to an end in the Cross.”

You remember that oft-told story of

Old John the Fish Peddler.

He had been the disgrace of the town for many years, for he was always in a drunken state. But God, who loves to show great mercy to great sinners, took up old John and saved him; and after he was saved, he was eager to provide a better home for his family. So he looked about until he found a suitable house, learned who owned it, went to him, and said, “I would like to rent that building; how much is the rent?” The man replied, “I wouldn’t rent it to you at any price.”

“Why, what do you mean?” questioned old John.

“I mean just what I say, not at any price; I wouldn’t trust you.”

“Why,” John said, “surely you don’t know who I am or you would not talk to me like that.”

“Yes, I do,” replied the man, “that is why I wouldn’t rent the building to you.”

“Well,” said John, “who am I?”

“Everybody knows you are old drunken John, the fish peddler,” the man answered.

“Oh, no,” said John, “you are mistaken; old John is dead; I am new John,” and so he told him how wonderfully God had saved him; then he found the man ready to enter into negotiations with him. Yes, the old man is gone, for God says, my “old man was crucified with Christ,” and I say “Amen” to that.

The Curse and the Cross

Then, too, the Cross of Christ speaks to the believer of deliverance from both the curse and the rule of the law, the law of Moses. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” In my unsaved state the

curse of the law was hanging over me; Sinai's thunders were rolling over my head, but my blessed Substitute went to the Cross, and the storm broke over Him; the lightnings of wrath burned themselves out in His soul, and He drank the cup of judgment, He exhausted the curse of the law, and there is now no curse for me.

I have often told that little story of the emigrants who years ago were trekking the vast prairies of what are now the middle western states of America. They were covered with tall dry grass. The party had passed a river the day before, and were going on with their cattle and covered wagons, when suddenly they were horrified to see a thin red line across the western horizon. They said, "The prairie is on fire! Whatever shall we do?" There was dry grass almost up to the horses' heads, the prairie on fire, the river a day's journey behind them, and they knew of no barrier in front that might hold the flames back.

The Shelter of the Cross

One of their number was more used to pioneer life in the west, and he said, "Clear a space, and set fire to the grass behind you!" They did this, and the wind carried the flame away toward the river. "Now," he said, "come here on to the charred ground, and you will be safe." And so they took their stand there. They could already feel the heat of the fire on their cheeks, and one frightened little girl cried, "Oh, are you sure we won't be burned up?"

"My child," the pioneer said, "the flames can never reach us here; we are *standing where the fire has been.*"

When you take your stand by faith at Calvary's Cross you are standing where the fire has been. Judgment can never reach you there.

"The wrath of God which was our due
Upon the Lamb was laid,
And by the shedding of His blood
Our debt was fully paid."

"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and the apostle says, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:19, 20). The law put my Substitute to death on that Cross, and therefore, it has nothing to say to me. My relationship toward it has been changed by death.

The World and the Cross

But there is one other thought. The Cross of Christ is that which, rightly

apprehended, separates me from the world. Has your soul laid hold on that which is found in Galatians 6:14? “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Don’t you see? The Cross has come in for ever between the world that I once loved, the world of which I was once a part, and myself as a sinner redeemed unto God by the precious Blood of Christ. When that world would woo me; when that world would seek to lure me by its follies, by its pleasures, by those things that are so attractive to the senses, the faithful heart replies,

“Nay world, I turn away,
Though thou seem pure and good;
That friendly outstretched hand of Thine
Is stained with Jesus’ Blood.”

I cannot be true to the Cross of Christ, and go on with the world that crucified Him. I have taken my choice, I have left the world behind for His dear Name’s sake, and so I can glory in that which, to the world, is a scandal—
THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

A young woman once exclaimed to an older one who was a devoted believer, “I would give the world for your Christian experience.”

“That is exactly what it cost me!” answered the other. “I gave the world for it.”

May God give us to enter into these things more deeply and may the Cross be our one theme as we seek to bear witness for Him in this world of sin for His Name’s sake.

“Most awful sight! on Calvary’s mount
Three crosses stand on bold relief:
There, in the midst, the Saviour dies;
On either side there hangs a thief!
O blessed Saviour, by Thy pain
The sinner reaps eternal gain!

“O soul, on those three trees behold
The *saved*, the SAVIOUR, and the *lost*;
The story of our ruined world—
The Saviour’s death, salvation’s cost!
Heaven’s door in judgment closed to sin.
Whilst faith in Jesus brings us in.”

CHAPTER VIII

Jesus and the Resurrection

“The time of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because He hath appointed a day in the 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 17:30, 31).

THE entire passage beginning with verse 16, and going on to the end of the chapter, is of tremendous interest, but I have no thought of attempting to explain it all, though I hope you will read it carefully at your leisure, if not thoroughly familiar with it, for it is undoubtedly one of the finest examples of preacher’s eloquence that we have anywhere in the Bible.

Paul appears here at his best from the human standpoint, but also speaks as a divinely inspired servant of Christ. Of Apollos we read elsewhere that he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, and it is very evident from this sample sermon that Paul was a man of the same stamp, though on the other hand he did not particularly cultivate what was simply rhetorical, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

But it was quite in keeping with his principle of being “made all things to all men,” that, when he stood on Mars’ Hill, the very centre of culture of the Greek world, he should meet those

Proud Attic Philosophers

on their own ground. So far as culture was concerned, he was every whit their equal, combining a thorough acquaintance with their literature, history, and customs, with a deep knowledge of the Word of God to which they were strangers. Thus he gave them that day a new and arresting message such as they had never heard before, and possibly many were destined never to hear again.

Notice some of the circumstances. Paul was waiting in Athens for several of his fellow-servants, who had returned to Thessalonica to find out how the new born Christians there were getting along. As he wandered about the city, his spirit was deeply stirred for he saw everywhere the evidences of idolatry. They worshipped everything in Athens, in fact an ancient philosopher once said, “In Athens it is easier to find a god than a man.” There were images on every street corner, over every doorway, in every courtyard, found in every store, and every dwelling-house. Turn where you would, you were confronted by these

Signs of Pagan Darkness,

and Paul, as he walked those streets, knew that the things the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to demons, and not to God; he knew that he was probably the only man in that city who had a knowledge of the true and living God, and of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet for the time being he saw no opportunity to give his message.

A Jewish synagogue, however, attracted his attention, and entering it, he claimed his right as a recognised teacher to speak, and there he presented the Gospel, disputing with the adherents of Judaism, and with proselytes, who were doubtless weary of the unsatisfactory character of idolatrous rites and ceremonies, and had sought out this place of instruction in the law of Moses.

In the market-place also he addressed himself to individuals, and sometime little groups would gather about him to whom he proclaimed the wondrous story of God's grace in Christ Jesus to a lost world. Little by little he drew the attention of the people, who were always interested in that which seemed new and strange. So we need not be surprised that at last certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics became interested in Him and his teaching.

The Epicureans

were those who said that man's supreme good is found in trying to please himself, that there is no use denying oneself; make the best of life by getting all the pleasure out of it you can, for you are going to be dead a long time. We can hear the echo of this in the so-called self-expression philosophy of our day. We are in the hands of a remorseless fate; we had nothing to say about coming into the world, and there is no telling what will happen when we leave it. Just grit your teeth, don't show the white feather, make up your mind that "what cannot be cured must be endured." Stoicism has come down through the ages as the synonym for patient endurance.

Some of these philosophers asked, "What will this babbler say?" To them he seemed to be setting forth new gods. New gods in Athens! They had searched the world to find all of them. They had shrines for the gods of Babylon, Phoenicia, Greece, Egypt, and Rome. They worshipped them all, and yet this man seemed to know something about some new ones, because Paul preached "Jesus and the resurrection." They thought that Anastasis (resurrection) was another God. They had the god of peace, the god of victory, the god of justice, the god of love, all these different deified human attributes, and now they thought, "This man seems to have two new gods, one called Jesus, and the other, resurrection. We would like to hear more about them." And they took him up to Mars' Hill, or the Areopagus. This overlooked Athens, and was where the philosophers met for discussion. So they invited Paul to come up there and expound his new doctrines. Led by them, he wended his way to the meeting-place above, and at once began to

proclaim the message that he had been yearning to give them for so long.

He took his text from an inscription he had seen on one of their altars, and said, as it were, “I see you are a very religious people. You seem to worship every god known to the Greeks, and all other nations, and as I walked about I noticed an altar with the inscription,

“To the Unknown God.”

Just such an altar has been unearthed recently. It was evident that these Athenians feared lest they might be neglecting some god whose name had not been communicated to them, and so they set up the altar that had attracted Paul’s attention.

What a splendid text it made. They recognised the fact that there might be a god of whom they had never heard. And so Paul said, “Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.” I am here, in other words, to tell you who the unknown God is. How can anyone make known the unknown? God has made Himself known in the person of His blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was there, indeed, to present Jesus and the resurrection, and let me say that no man preaches the Gospel unless he does preach Jesus and the resurrection.

There is no Gospel for guilty sinners apart from Christ, for the Gospel is God’s message about His blessed Son. The Gospel is not good advice to be obeyed, it is *good news to be believed*, and that good news concerns the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from the Glory that He had with the Father from all eternity down to the sorrow and anguish of the Cross of Calvary, where He bared His breast, that the sword of divine justice might be sheathed in His heart. He took our place and endured what we deserved. But that alone would not be the Gospel; there is something more needed. Paul preached

Jesus AND ———

And what? “*And* the resurrection.” Every sermon that he ever preached was an Easter sermon; every sermon that the early apostles preached was an Easter sermon, for wherever they went they preached that Christ *died* for our sins, that He was *buried*, and *rose again*. The essence of their message was that He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

So Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, and we today proclaim the same, and we tell you in His Name, “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. 10:9, 10).

Notice how Paul prepared the ground for his message.

The Creator and the Created

First of all, they were reminded that the Creator must be greater than that which is created, and Paul directed their attention to the visible universe. It was very evident that the God who made it all could not be confined in one of their temples. He says, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." He is not the God of one nation, but of all nations, and we are really one people, for He "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." He has put upon men the responsibility to know Him, for He is not far from any of us.

There is no man anywhere that can say in the Day of Judgment, "I wanted to find God and could not," for "Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." He is so close that if men will feel after Him, will stretch up empty hands toward Him, they will find His great strong hands reaching down to lay hold of them. God will never permit it to be said that any man honestly sought the way of life and failed to find it; that any man really wanted to be saved, and cried to God unheard.

This answers a question that troubles a good many people. I am often asked,

"What About the Heathen

that have never heard the Gospel, are they going to be damned because they have never heard?" No matter where a heathen man may be today, if he wants to know God, and honestly reaches out after Him, God will make Himself responsible to give that man light enough to be saved, for "He is not far from any one of us." "If haply they might feel after Him, and find Him."

This is the only place in the New Testament where we get the word "feel." I have often urged people to trust the Lord Jesus, and told them how He died for them, bore their sins on the Cross, and that if they will believe on Him, He has given His own Word that, "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." And then they say, "Well, I do *believe*, but I don't *feel* any different." That has nothing to do with it. The word "feel" is not a Christian word at all. The only place it occurs in the New Testament is here where Paul is speaking of the heathen. But you have an open Bible, you do not need to feel after God. What you need to do is to *believe* the testimony that He has given, and then you will be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house" (Acts 16:31) That is the word of the living God given through His servants of old.

“Feel” and “Feeling”

I said the word “feel” is found only once in the New Testament, but the word “feeling” is found twice. Once in Ephesians 4:19, where it speaks of certain Gentiles and says, “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;” and again in Hebrews 4:15, “We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Apart from these three instances, we do not find the words “feeling” or “feel” used in the New Testament. The moment you believe in Jesus, the moment you trust in Him, you pass out of death into life, out of condemnation into justification before the Throne of God.

In John 5:24, Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Notice the

FIVE DIVISIONS OF JOHN 5:24.

1. “HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD.” Face this; be honest with your own heart. Have you heard the Word of the Son of God? Have you heard Him speaking to you through this blessed Book?

2. “AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT ME.” Do you in your heart believe that God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to be the sinner’s Saviour, to die for you on the Cross, to rise from the dead for your justification?

3. “HATH EVERLASTING LIFE.” When do you get it? When you die? No, you get it *now*, from the moment you believe, from the moment you hear the Word of the Son of God, and believe in Him as the One whom the Father sent into the world to be the sinner’s Saviour. The trouble today is that people are stumbling over its very simplicity.

I heard of a man who wanted to be saved, and he was told to do penance for sin by putting hard dried peas in his shoes, and walking on them so many hours a day. This poor man did this and limped around the streets trying to make atonement. It would have done him just as much good if he had boiled the peas first.

But people are willing to do all kinds of hard things. They are like Naaman, who, when the prophet commanded “Go wash in the Jordan seven times,” said, “That is too easy a way.” But he had a wise old servant who suggested, “If the prophet had bid thee do some *great* thing, wouldest thou not have done it?” Why, of course he would. “How much rather then, when he saith unto thee, ‘Wash and be clean?’” If you had to give a great deal of money, say a great many prayers, make long pilgrimages, do vast numbers of charitable deeds, in order to get life eternal, how many of you would be willing to do these things? How much more when He saith to thee, “*Believe and live.*”

4. "SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION." Think of it! The Roman Catholic Version reads, "Amen, amen, I say unto you, whoso hears My word and believes Him that sent Me, has eternal life and comes not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life." Is that not good news? Not a word about purgatory, not a word about confession to a priest, not a word about sacramental observances, not a word about penance; but here and now, the moment you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins are gone and you will never come into Judgment, but you have everlasting life. It is all for you. That is the Gospel Paul preached. And notice the next point,

5. "IS PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE." It is a settled complete salvation, giving a new standing before God to the believing sinner.

Observe the THREEFOLD LINK WITH RESURRECTION:

I. Resurrection and Repentance

But what if men do not accept it? Then there is the Judgment. He says that God has been very gracious with the heathen, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to REPENT." Repent means to change your mind completely, to have a new attitude. You had an idea you could save yourself by your good works, but you change your mind, and now admit that you cannot do a thing to save yourself, but that Christ must do it all. That is repentance, a change of attitude toward God. Instead of trying to do anything to save yourself, let Jesus do it all.

God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a Day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained." God is going to judge the world in righteousness, but your case can be settled out of court, and settled today, so that you need never think of coming into judgment. But if you reject Christ, some day you must give account before His Judgment Throne.

II. Resurrection and Assurance

"Whereof He hath given ASSURANCE unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the ground of our assurance, that we shall live again after these bodies die. He says, "Because I live ye shall live also." We are told that, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Thus God has given assurance to all men of a *life after death*, "in that He hath raised Him from the dead." In the second place, He has given assurance unto all men that the sin question is settled in the death of Christ by raising His Son from the dead.

One Man in Prison for Another

Here is a man who has gone to prison for somebody else. He knew the

other man was guilty, but knew too, that, in order to prove his own innocence he would have to expose his friend, and so he goes into court, and hears the sentence to go to prison for one year. What must be the feelings of the other man outside? He says, "I have sent that man there; I deserve to go, but he is there in my place." Perhaps he goes to see him and the man says, "I took your place voluntarily, and I am quite content; you let me endure it." The other roams the streets and says, "I wonder how long he will be content; I wonder how long before he tells the whole story." But by and by a year has passed, and walking down the street one day he sees the one who went to prison for him, and he rushes up and says, "What does this mean?" "It means," is the reply, "that you have nothing to fear now. The sentence has all been endured."

So He, our blessed Lord, bore on the Tree the sentence for us, and now we who were once guilty sinners are free—"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." The resurrection is the proof that the sin question has been settled, that God is satisfied, "He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

III. Resurrection and Reckoning

In the third place, we have assurance in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that some day all men are going to GIVE ACCOUNT to Him. This will be when He sits upon the Great White Throne. Think of giving account of your sins to Him after all He has done to save you from them.

Notice the THREEFOLD RESPONSE that Paul's message had that day. "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. . . . Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed." I wonder if there are not people manifesting these three different attitudes toward the message today.

The Mockers

"SOME MOCK," some ridicule, some say, "Oh, we cannot believe this message about Jesus and the resurrection. We cannot accept it. We do not see how He could die for sinners, and rise again, and how men can be saved through believing in Him. God pity you if you are turning this message down. Some day He will turn you down, for He says in His Word, "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out My hands and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh " (Prov. 1:24-26). God grant that you may not at last be exposed to such a doom. Do not turn it down, do not go away with a cold, careless sneer and say, "It is nothing to me."

The Deferrers

The second class said, “We will HEAR THEE AGAIN of this matter.” They are the procrastinators. You may not be mocking, possibly you would not sneer at the Gospel message; you fully intend to be saved some day; you are saying, “We will hear you again, we are not ready to close with Christ today. There is so much to occupy heart and mind these days; some other time. Let us alone for the present. Sometime we will give attention to these things.” Remember the old saying: “Procrastination is the thief of time.” There is a Spanish proverb which says, “The road of by and by leads to the town of never.” How many have taken that road; have said, “By and by—some other day,” and have gone on and on, until at last they have reached the other world, hopelessly lost, and that for ever!

The Cleavers

The third class, “Howbeit certain men clave unto Him, and believed.” What a blessed testimony. God has recorded the names of two of them, one man and one woman, Dionysius and Damaris, who accepted the message proclaimed that day.

Men have an idea that what sinners need is more culture, more refinement; but if polite culture could have saved the world, Greece would have saved it long ago. But *Greece went all to pieces in spite of its culture*. It was the Gospel of the grace of God that saved the ancient world from ruin. And it is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves men today. I bring before you these two examples, Dionysius and Damaris, and I beg you to follow them as they followed Christ; believe the message, and go on rejoicing in Him.

CHAPTER IX

The Relation of the Church to the Second Coming of Christ

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s House are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him” (John 14:1-7).

I NEED not read further for these verses give us that which I have particularly upon my heart: What we may call the heavenly side of the truth of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, His return for the Church, which is His Body and His Bride, an event which is clearly distinguished in Scripture from the actual second Coming of the Lord to this world.

In the so-called synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, our Lord speaks again and again of the coming of the Son of Man, a term which always refers to His coming back again to establish the long promised Kingdom of righteousness on the earth. If you bear this in mind when you are reading the warnings in the Synoptics as a preparation for that Coming, you will not read the Church position into them.

To understand them aright, you must put yourself in spirit where the disciples were when Jesus was speaking to them, remembering that at that time nothing had yet been revealed concerning

The Mystical Body of Christ,

or the Heavenly Bride of the Lamb. Of Israel as the wife of Jehovah now divorced, but by and by to be brought back into the nuptial relationship with Him, they knew something from the Old Testament, and the teaching of the Lord fitted into that. But they knew nothing whatever of the precious truth which means so much to us today—*the relationship of the indwelling Spirit of God to a glorified Man in Heaven*. That was never revealed in Old Testament times nor yet during our Saviour’s ministry on the earth. Therefore, when He, for instance, says to His disciples, “Pray that ye may be counted worthy to escape these things that are coming upon the earth, and to stand before the Son of Man,” He speaks to them of that which they could understand. In other words, He addresses them as the remnant of Israel, the

people of whom we read in Isaiah and elsewhere, who will be preserved and kept by the grace and power of God in that day of awful Judgment upon the earth, in order that they may enter into the displayed Kingdom, which will have its capital on Mount Zion, in the land of Palestine. The great tribulation of which He speaks is the precursor of His second coming in this sense. We are told “immediately after the tribulation of those days, they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory.” But the promise to the Church is “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee *from the hour* of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

Again, take such a passage as

“He that Endureth Unto the End,

the same shall be saved.” What is the end here referred to? Surely the end of the *age*; that is, the close of the great tribulation, and the Lord’s reference is to the awful experiences so many of the Jewish remnant will be exposed to, and the efforts that will be made by Satan, and his minions to turn them away from the path of devotion to the coming Messiah. In that day, by divine power, they may be kept to the end, no matter what the enmity of the evil agencies here on earth may bring forth. So with all other Scriptures that seem to cast a doubt, perhaps, on the Church being kept out of the great Tribulation.

When we turn to the second part of John’s Gospel, and come as here to the upper room, it is as though Israel’s day for the time being was looked upon as already ended. To that little group of believers, the nucleus of the coming Church, those who on the Day of Pentecost were to be baptized by the Spirit into the one Body and thus begin a new dispensation, our Lord

Reveals Certain Things

which had never been made known before.

Not a word is said about the Holy Spirit as Comforter in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, nor yet in the first thirteen chapters of John. We never read about the Spirit of God as a divine Person, dwelling in believers, until in this section we hear the Lord Jesus say, “He hath been with you, He shall be in you.” There you have a great dispensational change intimated.

The Holy Spirit ever Active

All through Old Testament times, and during the days of our Lord’s ministry on earth, the Holy Spirit was with all who believed. He was with the antediluvian saints for Noah, by the Spirit, bore testimony in the days before the flood. He it was who guided the Patriarchs, and was with Moses empowering for testimony. We read that God gave His good Spirit to be with

Israel, and guide them through the wilderness. David from the depths of a broken and penitent heart cried, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." The Spirit of God fell upon men in the days of the Judges, and of the kingdom afterwards. He filled certain individuals for particular service. The prophets predicted the glorious outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the Messianic kingdom. But nowhere in the Old Testament, or in the Synoptics, or in the first part of John's Gospel is there set forth the truth of a divine personal Holy Spirit coming from Heaven to dwell in believers, baptizing them into one Body, and linking them to their glorified Head above. This is just barely intimated in John 7:37-39.

But these truths are first introduced here to prepare the disciples for the new administration so soon to begin. It is in this connection, He speaks for the

First Time Clearly of His Return

for His Own in an altogether different way than that of His coming to Israel. Instead of speaking of the Son of Man coming in the glory of the Father with the holy angels like a lightning flash; instead of His glorious apocalyptic manifestation; and instead of His coming to earth, and sending forth His angels to gather together the elect of Israel, and bring them back to the city of the Great King, you find the Lord giving them a wonderful revelation, though in few words, that He has something else in view for them. Of this they will learn more fully in due time, for He says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." That might be rendered, "You cannot apprehend them now." It was as though He said, "You are not now ready for them; you have not been cut loose from Israel's dispensational hopes. After the Holy Spirit is come and the new economy has been ushered in, you will be prepared to comprehend these things; then you will understand."

But He tells them, "I am going away, and where I am your heart should be. I am going to the Father's House; there are many resting places there, but none are suitable for you. I am going to prepare a Place for you." I think we have a revelation of that later on. That is the place in the immediate presence of God, in the holiest of all inside the rent veil; that never could be until after an accomplished redemption.

It was better than the wildest dreams of the Old Testament saints,—that redeemed men should actually dwell with the glorified Christ in the immediate presence of God in Heaven.

Jesus, by going to the Cross, opened up a new and living way "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." So today in spirit, we already enter into what shall be our portion for eternity. The veil is already rent, and our souls draw near with boldness to a Throne of Grace. That is the prepared place,

and that will be our portion for ever.

How Are We Going to Reach All This

actually? Well, He says, “If I go and prepare a Place for you I WILL COME AGAIN”—and do what? Set up my Kingdom on earth? No, that is not what He is speaking of here. Execute judgment on the wicked? No, it is not that which He has in view. What then?—Redeem Israel as a nation? Not now,—but “I will come again and *receive you unto Myself*, that where I am there ye may be also.”

How their hearts must have thrilled as they heard this first mention of what we now speak of as the Rapture. He does not unfold the nature of it. He simply declares the truth. *He is Coming again to receive His Own unto Himself*. I know you might get a beautiful picture of this in the parable of the ten virgins and, of course, that parable sets forth the proper attitude that His people should have during all the time of His absence; and the joy that will be theirs when He returns, if they are ready to meet Him. But strictly speaking, here in John 14, we have the first clear definite instruction concerning the Rapture.

We have to turn to the writings of the Apostle Paul to get a fuller unfolding of this glorious event. How will the Lord receive us to Himself? How will He fulfil this promise? We turn to the great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, and we read from verse 51, “Behold,

I Show You a Mystery.”

MYSTERY! I hardly need remind you that this word as used in Scripture, does not refer to something difficult to understand. It is not something that is in itself mysterious. But it means something that has been *kept secret until the time for its revelation* had come. The word was commonly used among the Greeks, in the day the New Testament was written, for the secrets of the various oath-bound religious organisations, that were revealed to the initiates after they had passed through certain ceremonial rites. And people use it today in exactly the same way. You hear a lot of the mysteries of various secret oath-bound lodges.

Here I may turn aside to say a word as to these. Possibly many of you are members of such societies. Three Scriptures have kept me out of anything of the kind, though I have often been urged to apply for membership in some of them. Many come up to me at the close of meetings, and shake hands with me in peculiar ways, and look to see if I respond. But the only hand-shake I know anything about is a good straightforward Christian greeting. I belong to the G.A.R., the

Grand Army of the Redeemed,

and to no worldly society of any kind! The three Scriptures I refer to are these: First, "Jesus said, in secret have I said nothing." Second, "He left us an example that we should follow His steps." Third, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." These Scriptures leave no place in an esoteric hidden cult for saved and unsaved alike to participate. The precious mysteries of the Word of God are now made known to all who will believe.

Just as those who are on the inside know the secrets of the lodges and religious cults, so believers should be familiar with the Mysteries of God. All through Old Testament times He had precious and wonderful secrets of which Moses spoke, when he said, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed are for us, and for our children for ever."

Now in this glorious dispensation of the Holy Spirit, many hitherto concealed mysteries have been made known. The complete revelation of the will of God comes later. We read in Revelation 10:7, "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets." This will be at the close of the Great Tribulation, whereas the mystery of which Paul speaks in First Corinthians 15, will *precede* that time of trouble.

So, if you have any unsolved problems as to

God's Age-long Toleration of Evil

or other difficulties, you will have the explanation then. Everything will be perfectly clear in that day. But God has already opened up to us some very wonderful mysteries and this is one of them. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51). He is speaking of believers, but, of course, when he uses the term "sleep" he means "death." Do not make the mistake of thinking that Paul was a soul sleeper. He has made it very clear elsewhere that for the believer, death means "absent from the body, present with the Lord." But when He speaks of sleep, he refers to *physical death*. All down through the ages, death has claimed the bodies of believers, but there are some here, perhaps, who will not taste of death until they see the blessed Lord Coming to call His Own to be with Himself.

"WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP, BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED."

Changed! Transformed!

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." We cannot enter upon the full enjoyment of the Heavenly side of that kingdom in these bodies and under present conditions. We must be transformed. Our bodies of humiliation must be made like unto the body of His glory. And when will it take place? "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." Just

as quickly as the flash of light appears in the eye, this change will take place when our Lord returns.

“FOR THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND, AND THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE, AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Notice again the two classes of believers. This corruptible—those who have *died*, whose bodies have all been seized upon by corruption. This mortal—those who are *living* when the Lord returns, living on the earth in their mortal bodies—shall immediately become immortal. So when these two changes take place—when “this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” Therefore, in the light of this hope, the apostle can

Challenge Our Great Enemy:

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave (Hades), where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.” Sin was settled for at Calvary’s Cross, and the believer is no longer under the law.

“THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW.” What an astounding expression! Is not the law the strength of holiness? If you want to live a holy life, must you not put yourself under the law, and strive with all the energy of your being to keep its commandments? No, the Word of God declares, “The strength of sin is the law,” because the law stirs up everything that is evil in the heart of unregenerate man, and he finds himself hopeless to obey its commandments.

You say, “Yes, that was true of us in our unconverted state but when we were born of God, everything changed, and now the law has become the strength of holiness.” But, no; the strength of holiness is the indwelling Spirit of God, He who is spoken of characteristically as the Holy Spirit. He fulfils the righteousness of the law in us, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” And so we can say, “Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Observe, then,

The Rapture Takes Place in a Moment,

and at the last trump. There are those who think of this as the last of the seven trumpets, the Judgments in the Book of Revelation, but there is no connection whatever between the two. *They* are trumpets of doom; *this* is a trumpet of blessing. But the last trump, I understand, is that which winds up the church’s history in the earth.

Some think, possibly rightly, that it is really a military term, which was used of old in connection with the Roman army. There were three trumps. Suppose the camp is wrapped in darkness, and the legionaries are all sound

asleep. An enemy is approaching; the warning word comes to the commander who calls the trumpeter to sound an alarm. At the first trump every one is aroused. At the second trump all fall into line. At the last trump they march away. So you and I who are saved heard the first trump when we were sound asleep in our sins. That was the Gospel trump: it awakened us from our sleep, and we sprang to our feet as new creatures in Christ Jesus. I trust that we have also heard the trump which calls us to take our place in the ranks, of yielding ourselves in ready obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what wait we for? For the last trump—not to march away, but to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Turn to the corresponding passage in 1 Thessalonians 4. 14. You notice this trump is spoken of there as “THE TRUMP OF GOD;” not, therefore, to be confounded with

The Trumpets of Angels

in the Book of Revelation. It is God Himself summoning His own to meet His blessed Son in the air. Let us read the passage: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again”—and we do, if we do not we are not Christians, according to Romans 10. 9. On the authority of that Scripture we dare to say without any unkindness, that *no man is what the Bible calls a Christian if he denies the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus*. Everything for us depends upon that blessed fact that “He was delivered for our offences, and *raised again* for our justification,” and so we read, “If we believe that Jesus *died and rose again*, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

Now this is most striking. Bring with Him where? When He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. You see this event links up with the revelation given concerning the Coming of the Son of Man in the Synoptics and the Old Testament prophecies concerning the same event. We read in Zechariah 14 that in the darkest hour of Palestine’s distress the Lord God shall come, and all the saints with Him. Some might think of those saints as simply angels, but the New Testament shows us that there will also be redeemed men and women in association with Christ in glory. True, He will come with the holy angels, but also with the saints, once poor sinners, but saved by grace. These will shine forth with Him. But how can that be? Their bodies throughout the centuries have been corrupting in the grave, and those who come with Him will not merely be unclothed, but resurrected, or changed believers.

How Will This be Brought About?

The next verse tells us. “FOR THIS WE SAY UNTO YOU BY THE WORD OF THE LORD, THAT WE WHICH ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN”—meditate on that

expression. How blessed to realise that these words may refer to some who are now living on the earth. Throughout this dispensation this event is ever treated as imminent, though never declared to be immediate.” We which are alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep.” The old English word “prevent” means, of course, “precede.” We shall not enter into Christ’s train before the saints who have died.” For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

In other words, if we are living on the earth when the Lord returns, we will not go into the Kingdom one moment ahead of anybody else, for “the Lord Himself” is first to descend to the air, and His voice will raise the righteous dead. We read of the shout of the Lord, the voice of the archangel, and in the book of Daniel he is particularly linked with the destinies of Israel, “the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” So in the same instant the thousands of the Israel of God who have died in faith all over the world, and the redeemed of the Lord of all other dispensations will be raised.

“Stand Up” and “Caught Up”

“THE DEAD IN CHRIST”—no one else—“shall rise first;” literally *stand up first*. The word for resurrection throughout the New Testament has this meaning. They will stand up from the graves in their resurrection bodies, an exceeding great army.” Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” In this way the Church and Old Testament saints will all be with the Lord in their resurrection or changed bodies, prior to His descent to take the Kingdom. So at God’s appointed time He will bring these with Christ when He returns to earth again.

Others have pointed out that that word “meet” does not merely mean “casually running into some one,” as, for instance, on the side of the roadway, as we say, “I met So-and- so.” But rather, as we say, “So-and-so is coming, and I am going out to meet him.” When you meet him, possibly you go immediately home, or, perhaps, there is something else to occupy you before you take him to the house. Now the word used here has that meaning. We will be caught up to meet the Lord, not in order to return with Him immediately, for certain events must take place on earth before His manifestation, when we shall come back with Him. There are others that take place in Heaven: the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It will be after this that He will descend to take the Kingdom and all His saints with Him.

Just one other passage, the first chapter of Thessalonians, verse 9.

Speaking of the conversion of these Thessalonians, Paul writes, “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from Heaven.” This certainly suggests the imminent Coming of the Lord. There are no events that must necessarily take place first.

The Spirit of God was not pleased to reveal at that time the course of the last nineteen hundred years. Every believer living before, and all through the centuries since, was entitled to look up in

Daily Expectation of the Lord’s Return,

an expectation which has a sanctifying effect upon our hearts and lives as we read in 1 John 3:3, “And every man that hath this Hope in Him (Christ) purifieth himself even as He is pure.”

It is important, however, to note that, while Scripture clearly teaches the imminency of the Lord’s return, it never insists on the immediateness of that event. We cannot say when it will take place, but we should always be looking for it.

But now let us finish the passage.” To wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from

The Wrath to Come.”

The past tense is used here, but scholars tell us it hardly conveys the full thought. It is rather “which shall deliver us from the wrath to come.” What is that? Eternal judgment? No, we have been saved from that already. We shall never come into judgment. “The wrath to come” is that which is yet to fall upon this world when the wrath of the Lamb, and the wrath of God will be visited upon the dwellers of the earth, and when Satan shall be cast down from Heaven, “having great wrath because he knoweth that his time is short.” At that time the Church will no longer be here. We shall be delivered from that wrath to come. How? Snatched away when our blessed Lord descends from Heaven with a shout. This is the believer’s Hope. God grant it may be yours, and that you may ever live in view of this glorious event.

“Midst the darkness, storm and sorrow,
One bright gleam I see;
Well I know the blessed morrow,
Christ will come for me.

“Oh, the blessed joy of meeting!
All the desert past!
Oh, the wondrous words of greeting
He shall speak at last!

“Meet companion then for Jesus,

From Him, for Him made;
Glory of God's grace for ever
There in me displayed.

“He who in His hour of sorrow
Bore the curse alone;
I who through the lonely desert
Trode where He had gone.

“He and I in that bright glory
One deep joy shall share—
Mine, to be for ever with Him!
His, that I am there!”

CHAPTER X

The God of the Valleys

“And there came a man of God, and spake unto the King of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord: Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord” (1 Kings 20:28).

I DO not know how familiar you may be with the incident linked with these words, but some of you at least will recall that when Ahab of evil memory was king of Israel, Benhadad, king of Syria, sought an occasion of quarrel with him, and invaded the land of Israel with a great army. Although Ahab had no real title or right to cry to God and expect any blessing, yet, because of the need of His people, and because of the proud and hard Syrians, God intervened in a wonderful way, and in the hill country, in the northern part of the land, gave to Israel a great victory so that the Syrians were utterly scattered.

Trying to account for their defeat, they said, “It is very evident that the God of Israel is a God of the hills; our gods are gods of the valleys. These Israelites are highlanders, they are used to the mountains and their God is accustomed to giving them victory in the hill country. Their God is a God of the hills; He is not the God of the valleys; therefore, we will reorganise our armies, and will come against Israel at the turn of the year, but we will be careful not to be lured by them into the highlands. We will draw them down into the plains, and there we will overwhelm them, and we will prove that our gods are the gods of the valleys, and theirs is not.”

So when this word came, Jehovah sent a prophet to Ahab, saying, “Thus saith the Lord: because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but He is

Not God of the Valleys

therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.”

The people of Israel were just a little company, and the Syrians encamped against them were a great host. The result was a tremendous victory for Israel. They did not deserve it, but God who delighteth in mercy, and is very jealous of the honour of His own Name, took this way of proving that He was just as truly the God of the valleys as He was the God of the hills.

You know many of us live in the valleys the greater part of the time. We do not spend nearly as much time on the mountain tops of blessing as, perhaps, we should. We gather together in meetings, and get enthused by a

splendid song leader, and sing, “I’m living on the mountain, underneath the cloudless sky,” and then we leave the meeting and the beautiful music behind, and go out to face life. We come down into trying experiences, and to the commonplace difficulties of life, and realise that we are no longer on the mountain; we are down in the valley. In fact, most of us spend much of our time in

The Valley of the Commonplace.

Very few of us attain the ideals that were in our minds years ago.

Many of us can look back to the time when we were young, and had such high ambitions—ambitions which we have never realised. As the years have gone on we find that most of us live our lives down in the valleys of the commonplace; we do not get very high up; we do not know very much of fame or honour. If we should pass away, perhaps the most that the newspaper would have about us would be a little paid notice put in by the undertaker. Yes, we live our lives in the valley of the commonplace, but we come to realise that God is the God of the valleys, and that He is interested in the people of the lowlands, and not merely in those who climb to the mountain tops. President Lincoln said, “God certainly must have loved the common people because He made so many of them.”

But I am not thinking so much of the valleys in that sense; I have in mind certain valleys of which we read in the Word of God, valleys through which all of us will have to pass some time or another.

I. The Valley of Baca

We read of one of these in Psalm 84:5, 6: “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.”

You may consult any Bible atlas; you may look over any map of ancient lands, but you will never find the valley of Baca. The fact of the matter is that it is a well-known district indeed through which all our feet pass at some time as we go through this life, for the valley of Baca is really the valley of weeping, the valley of trouble. You know something of that—of the valley of sorrow, the valley of trial, the valley of perplexity, the valley of testing, the valley of difficulty, when the tears will start, try to keep them back as you may. But what a blessed thing to know that God is with us when we go through the valley of Baca. Those who are in fellowship with Him find that passing through this valley He provides springs of refreshment, “The rain also filleth the pools.” It is wonderful the way God makes Himself known to the troubled heart in such a manner as He cannot reveal Himself to those with whom all is going well. It is in the trials of life that we learn to know our God in a way that we could not know Him without them.

“We know Him as we could not know
Through Heaven’s golden years,
We there shall see His glorious face,
On earth they saw His tears.”

It is in the hour of trial, and it is in

The Valley of Weeping

that the blessed Lord can reveal Himself as at no other time, for He, too, has passed through that valley, and so we speak of Him as “The Man of Sorrows.”

“‘Man of Sorrows,’ what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim.
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

“Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His Blood.
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

“Lifted up was He to die,
‘It is finished,’ was His cry;
Now in Heaven exalted high.
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!”

And up there in the glory He is “this same Jesus” who once trod the valley of weeping here on earth.

“When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed Home to bring;
Then anew this song we’ll sing:
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!”

When we look at His wonderful face, upon that visage that was once marred more than any man, we shall know that He is indeed our blessed Jesus, the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief, who has been our Companion, our Friend, our Sustainer, as we walked through the valley of weeping.

The Bible does not exhort to

Stoical Indifference

to trial, and does not insist that we dry our tears, for Jesus wept with the sorrowing sisters of Bethany. Be assured today if you are going through the valley of weeping, that His heart beats in tender love and sympathy; for if “one member of the Body suffer, all the members suffer with it.” Yes, the

God of the valleys is with His people as they pass through the valley of weeping. Do not hold anything back from Him; avail yourself of the privilege of prayer, of going to Him with your troubles. Remember He has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

II. THE VALLEY OF ACHOR

There is another valley of which we read in Hosea 2:14, 15, where the Lord, speaking of Israel, says: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her, her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."

But what is the valley of Achor? Do you remember where we first read of that valley in Scripture? You recall how God gave Israel such a marvellous victory when they went up against Jericho. He told them that they were not to take of the riches of Jericho for themselves. Then a few days later, when they went against Ai, only to suffer a humiliating defeat, Joshua threw himself down before God and said, "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?" And God said, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of

The Accursed Thing,

and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies."

Then you will recall how the tribes passed before the Lord, and the tribe of Judah was taken, and then a certain family of this tribe, and then God pointed out Achan, and said, "That is the reason I cannot give you the victory." And Joshua said, "Confess what you have done." And Achan answered, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel . . . when I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

A messenger was sent, and found it was exactly as Achan had said, and then because it was the dispensation of law, and not of grace, he and his family were taken out into the valley of Achor, and stoned with stones until they died.

What is the valley of Achor? It is

The Valley of Retribution;

it is the valley of suffering for one's own failures, for one's own sins. The greatest grief that Christians can ever be called upon to bear is to be brought into the valley of Achor, where they realise that things might have been so different if in years gone by they had only walked with God; but they failed Him, they acted contrary to His Word, and because of that they have had to prove the truth of that passage, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." These words are spoken to the children of God. Do not think for a moment that because we have been washed in the precious blood of Christ we shall escape the result of our sins.

I know a splendid Christian man, who in years gone by lived a life of sin. The Lord came in, in a wonderful way, and saved him, and that man now is as great a saint as he was a sinner, but he will bear in his body

The Results of His Former Life

as long as he lives. He has suffered untold agony physically because of the path he once trod, and he has said that there were times when he was tempted to wonder whether God had ever forgiven him. There are some results of sin from which we shall never be delivered until we receive the redemption of our bodies at the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But as we pass through the valley of Achor, we may have the blessed presence of our Lord with us, and know that He is indeed the God of the valleys as well as the God of the mountains.

Only a few weeks ago a splendid Christian woman who has known the Lord only seven years, a widow of a millionaire, said to me, "Pray for my boy; pray for my girl; they have no interest in the things of God. I can never get them to hear the Word of God. They are courteous and polite if I bring a servant of the Lord to my home, but they will allow no one to say a word to them, and they will not read the Bible." And then she said, "The worst of it is that they are what they are because I brought them up that way. Until seven years ago, I lived the life that they are living; I led them in the path they are now going. A Bible was never opened in my home until my husband died, and left me a broken-hearted woman, surrounded with all the luxuries he had given me, and I was crying out for something that could help me. Christ came to me, but it was too late to turn my children's steps in the right way. They are treading the path on which I started them. Pray for them. Join with me in pleading that as God reached me, He will reach them."

This mother was passing through the valley of Achor. The Lord says, "I will give her, her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for

A Door of Hope."

This is what He is going to do for Israel; they have been passing through the valley of Achor since refusing the Messiah, and what has been the result? They have suffered as no other people have suffered, and the worst is yet to come, but He will bring them in triumph through the valley of Achor. So, as we seek to be subject to the will of God, to endure what He in His infinite wisdom puts upon us, He will prove that He is the God of the valley of retribution as well as of every other experience of life.

III. THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

There is another valley through which we all pass. Psalm 23:4: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” I said that every one of us shall pass through this valley, and some of you may have thought, “Oh, but if the Lord should come, we will never have to go through the valley of the shadow of death.”

The valley of the shadow of death is not the hour of death itself; but it is that deep, dark valley through which we are called to pass when the death of a loved one casts a dark shadow over our lives. That is the valley of the shadow of death, and who is there here that has not passed through it!

“There is no sheepfold howsoe’er defended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no household howsoe’er protected,
But has one vacant chair.”

There is not one of us here who has not cried out, “Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is still!”

An orphan lad whose foster-mother had just passed away, sat on the steps after the funeral service, sobbing out his little heart, and when some one tried to comfort him, he exclaimed, “Oh, I want some one to love who will never die!” Thank God, we who trust Christ have some one to love who will never die. “I am He that liveth!”

It is of Him we speak when with the Psalmist we cry, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me.” He, once the Man of Sorrows, is nevertheless the God of the valleys, as truly God as truly man, and as truly man as He is truly God. Having passed through death, He is able to comfort and strengthen and cheer our hearts, as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

IV. THE VALLEY OF BERACHAH

Not all the valleys are dark. There is another one which is the valley of gladness. We are told that when King Jehoshaphat won a great victory, he led the people of Israel into a remarkable valley. “And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah: for there they blessed

the Lord: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day” (2 Chron. 20. 26). Berachah means what? It means blessing. All blessings are not received upon the mountain tops, in the high and great experiences of life, but down in the low places, down in the valleys of the commonplace; there we also have communion with God, and happy fellowship with Him. One of our Christian poets has written:

“In the valley with my Saviour I need never, never fear,
For 'tis there His sweetest message oft is whispered in my ear.
There I learn the heavenly secrets, there with joy He fills my soul;
Though the torrent rushes by me, and the chilly mists enroll.”

CHAPTER XI

How Herod Lost His Soul

“For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:27 and 28).

THE names of Herod and Pontius Pilate are intimately linked together in the mock trial of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost mentions them in one verse in the book of Acts. God permitted them to go only as far as He Himself had predetermined, but their names are

Joined in Eternal Infamy.

They both had marvellous opportunities, such as possibly few men ever had, of meeting the Lord Jesus Christ face to face, and yet they lost their souls. Of Herod we read in the sixth chapter of Mark, verse 20, “for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he observed him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.” That certainly sounds encouraging, and yet the last record we have in Holy Scripture of that man is given in Luke 23:7-12:

“And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod with his men of war set at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.”

The casual reader of the New Testament generally has some difficulty in distinguishing between

The Various Herods

who are mentioned in the records. The Herod who issued the decree to destroy the young children of Bethlehem, was an altogether different Herod from this one. That was Herod the Great. He died about the year that our Lord was born, very shortly after the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem. He was a monster of iniquity. Augustus Cæsar said of him, after hearing of the slaughter of Herod’s own sons at the command of their cruel father,

“Better to be Herod’s hog than Herod’s son.”

The early Christians had a tradition, which may or may not be true, that when that fatal command went forth to destroy all the male children of Bethlehem two years of age and under, in the hope of destroying the Lord Jesus Christ who was looked upon as a possible rival to the throne, the soldiers did their dreadful business so well that they slew Herod’s favourite grandson, the only child that monster loved. He passed off the scene, and this Herod, of whom we are speaking, was one of his sons. His name was Herod Antipas. He is not the same Herod as the one of whom we read in Acts who was saluted as a god, and then was eaten by worms. That was Herod Agrippa I. The Agrippa before whom the Apostle Paul presented the Gospel message was a son of this man.

The Herod of the Gospels

The Herod about whom we are concerned reigned over Galilee and Perea from B.C. 4 when his father, Herod the Great, died, until A.D. 29 when he passed away in great wretchedness and misery upon being banished to Gaul by Caesar, the sovereign whom he served. This is the one who occupies so large a place in the Gospels. There was a time when this man seemed to have a measure of concern about holy things.

We read in Mark’s Gospel that when John the Baptist began his ministry, when he came preaching the baptism of repentance for remission of sins, and men were flocking to hear him, Herod became interested, so interested that from time to time he sent for him, and asked him to give him the same message that he was giving to the people. He listened evidently with an exercised heart. No doubt many a time as John presented his solemn message, Herod said to himself, “Yes, yes, this man is right; I am all wrong. I ought to yield to God; I ought to get right with Him; I ought to turn to Him in repentance; I am a sinner, and my sins deserve judgment, and I ought to cast myself upon the infinite mercy of God acknowledging my guilt.” But Herod listened again and again, as some of you have listened again and again to the message of the Lord, and, instead of that message making his heart more tender, and eventually resulting in his yielding to the call of God, the more he listened the harder his heart became. You have heard of people becoming what we call “Gospel-hardened.” That is, they listen to the message from Heaven so frequently, and yet treat it with such indifference that the time comes when it no longer makes any impression upon them. Generally there is a reason for that.

I was very much impressed by a remark that Mr. Melvin Trotter made recently. He said, “In the last analysis there is always just *one sin* that keeps a man from getting right with God.” What was the one sin that kept Herod

from getting right with God? It was a sin that has damned untold thousands, a sin of which, perhaps, many of you are guilty, a sin, which if not repented of, will destroy both body and soul. It was the sin of IMPURITY.

Herod and Herodias

Herod was a licentious, an immoral, an impure man. It was manifested in many ways, but particularly in this: when he was a young prince in Rome, where he had gone to be confirmed in his kingdom by Augustus Caesar, he met his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, and she was not only the wife of his brother, Philip, but she was also his own niece. She was a very beautiful, a very attractive woman, and Herod allowed his heart to go out after her in an impure way. As far as the records go, she was a faithful wife to her own husband at that time, but Herod seduced her, and took her away from her husband, sent his own wife home to her father, the king of Arabia, desolate, and took Herodias to be his mistress when he came back to Galilee to reign.

When John the Baptist stood before him preaching righteousness, and calling to repentance, Herodias sat there on the throne beside him, and Herod knew that if he would ever get right with God, he would have to send home this woman, with whom he was living in such an ungodly relationship, but he had not the manhood, the courage, and the real inward desire to do it, because he was bound by the chains of his own lusts.

Oh, how many men down through the centuries have been ruined in the same way. John the Baptist was aware of the real trouble; he knew why his words made so little impression upon Herod, and so one day as he came into the presence of this haughty tetrarch, John pointed the accusing finger at Herod and said, "You have no right to have her; she is the wife of another man. You are sinning against God; you are sinning against her; you are sinning against her husband; you are sinning against society; you are sinning against your own soul in going on in this unholy relationship." What was the result? Herodias flamed with anger. She said, "That man is accusing me in accusing Herod. If Herod is a sinner, I too am a sinner. If Herod is doing wrong, I am doing wrong, and I won't allow any man to accuse me in this way without having my revenge on him. "

So powerful was the influence of this woman, that she persuaded Herod, who had become as putty in her hands, to lay hold on John, and to cast him into prison—in prison for telling the truth! Herod knew John told the truth; Herod knew he was wrong; he knew he was guilty; but he was a coward, and was bound by the chains of his lust, and his impurity kept him out of Heaven. What sin is it that stands between you and the salvation of your soul? What sin is it that keeps you from saying to God,

“Nay, but I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more;
I sink by dying love compelled,
And own Thee conqueror. “

You know the sin of impurity is everywhere today. It is like

A Festering Sore in Society.

With all their outward veneer of culture and politeness and social etiquette, these days are as rotten and filthy in the sight of God as the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, or as the days before the Flood; and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has told us, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:26). We are living in just such times as described. If you are one who is bound by the chains of impurity, whatever form those chains may take, God help you to come to the place where you will acknowledge your sin, and seek deliverance before you find at last that you are ruined body and soul and spirit, and lost for eternity.

Herod’s Birthday Tragedy

One wrong step easily leads to another, if not repented of. Herod found this out. The sin of impurity led to the sin of rejecting the Word of God, imprisoning the servant of God, and at last of murdering him. Then you remember that solemn incident given in the fourteenth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, and again in the sixth chapter of Mark. I will read from Matthew: “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus.” Some years had gone by; Jesus had come forth from the seclusion of that little home in Nazareth. He was going up and down the country preaching the Kingdom of God accredited by the marvellous signs that proclaimed His Messiahship. Herod heard of Him, and at once his conscience became uneasy.

Something had happened. John had been put to death, and that in the most cruel way, and Herod said, when he heard of Jesus, “This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and, therefore, mighty works do show forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife. . . . And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, “Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger.” And the king was sorry.

He realised he had been put in a tight place. He was carried away by his admiration of this flippant little godless butterfly who had been dancing

before him and his court. He had made the promise without thinking what it might involve. He had said, "Tell me what you want as a reward," and she said, "Mother, for what shall I ask?"

This was the hour for which Herodias had waited; now was the time to get revenge on the man who had told her the truth, who had unmasked the iniquity of her life, and Herod's life. And she whispered, "Tell him to have the head of John the Baptist cut off, and presented on a charger"—really, on a dinner-plate. She asked for it as for a mere trifle.

For a moment

Herod Was Terrified;

again his conscience was awakened, and he said, "Whatever shall I do?" But for his oath's sake, and because of those that sat around, he said, "I will have to carry it out." What a contemptible character, afraid to come out and say, "No, I have made a tremendous mistake, a fearfully wicked blunder, and cannot carry out such a vile oath." Instead he said, "I cannot have these people think I say one thing and do another. No matter what Almighty God thinks, I shall have to keep my face before these people," and so he sent for the executioner, and had John the Baptist beheaded, and his head brought on a charger to the daughter of Herodias; she brought it to her mother.

Can you imagine anything more gruesome? Does it not show what she really was? Here was this little frivolous doll, who could spend her time dancing before this crowd, and you would think that she was so dainty that the very sight of blood would fill her with disgust. Yet she comes to her mother bearing the bloody head of the preacher of the Word of God.

You can understand the feeling of Spurgeon when some one asked him, "Do you think there is any harm in dancing?" He answered, "What a question to ask a Baptist minister when the first Baptist minister had his head danced off!"

Oh, the vileness of it! I can imagine how Herodias gloated over it, and said to herself as she looked at those cold, silent lips, "They will never accuse me again; they will never again say to me, 'You are living in impurity;' they will never again charge me with my sin." She forgot that she was going to face that man some day at the Judgment bar of God.

I think I see Herodias as she stands before that

Last Great Tribunal;

and I see John the Baptist there with his blessed Lord; as she comes before that throne, suddenly her eyes get sight of him, and she shrieks, "Let me get away into the darkness; anywhere from those accusing eyes. That man who dared to stand before Herod, and me, and say, 'You have sinned,' and I thought I was rid of him, and that I would never see him again, but there he

is! Hell itself will be a refuge if it will only hide me from that face!” But she has to endure the consequences of her sin eternally!

Follow Herod’s history, and you will find that he sinks lower and lower into iniquity. When Jesus was warning His disciples of the vile corruptions of the times, He said, “Take heed, beware of

The Leaven of Herod.”

What was the leaven of Herod? It was corruption of the worst kind, corruption that would destroy society, that would gloss over the vilest iniquity as though it were something not worthy of divine disapproval.

Herod was the only man of whom Jesus ever used a sarcastic epithet. He was drawing near to Jerusalem for the last time. His disciples had said, “Do not go down to Jerusalem, Herod is there, and he will seek to kill you.” But Jesus said, “Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today, and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13. 32). That is the only time Jesus ever used an epithet like that about anybody. “Go ye, and tell *that fox*.” He was a shifty, cruel character, past description.

When the Saviour stood before Pilate, and the Roman governor wanted to get rid of the responsibility of giving sentence concerning Him, he overheard somebody remark that He was from Galilee, and like a drowning man, clutching at a straw, he said, “From Galilee? I hear the tetrarch from Galilee is in the city. He and I are enemies, but this may be a good opportunity to make up with him. I will recognise him, because this man comes from Galilee.”

So the guard took Christ to Herod and when Herod saw him, there was a little of that old-time quiver that was in his heart when he listened to John. One more opportunity had been vouchsafed to him to get right, and we read, “When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad.” It was as though he said, “Now, this is the one I have been so afraid of. I thought it was John the Baptist, but if it were he, I would have heard from him before now. I would like to see Him do some great miracle.”

Christ Silent Before Herod

And we read, “He questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing.” Can you not visualise the scene? The vile, voluptuous, licentious, corrupt tetrarch of Galilee sitting upon his throne, and standing before him the blessed Christ of God! And Herod said, “Why, I am glad to see you; I wonder if you cannot answer some questions for me.” He put question after question, but Jesus did not even open His lips; He gave no reply. What did it mean? Did not Jesus care for this man’s soul? Was He not as ready to help him as He was to help others? This man had lost his soul; he was as good as checked for Hell. He had sinned against light and knowledge

until now there was no possibility of bringing him to repentance, and so Christ met each question in absolute silence.

Had Herod said to Jesus, “Master, I am so glad to see You. They tell me You consort with publicans and sinners, and O Master, if there is a sinner in this land, I am he. So filthy, so impure, so immoral, so unclean; Master, is there healing, is there cleansing, is there help for a sinner like me?”

Jesus would have said, “Herod, I have come, not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance. You are just the man I came to save. Are you ready to part with your sin? Are you ready to send that wicked woman back to her home? Are you ready to confess your guilt to her husband, to face your iniquity? If you are, Herod, let me tell you something. I am just on My way to the Cross, and there I am going to offer myself a Sacrifice for your sin, and you may be cleansed from every stain.”

Yes, He would have had a message like that for Herod if there had been any repentance. But Herod had

Gone by Redemption Point

in the river of life, so hardened was he in his sins. So when there was no answer, Herod turned carelessly away. “And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.” And then Herod joined in actual persecution, and “with his men of war set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.”

That is the last Herod had to do with Jesus until the Day when he stands before the Great White Throne! There he will see sitting upon that Throne in awful majesty, the very Man that once stood before him in Jerusalem, the One who could have saved him, the One who could have cleansed him, if he had only been in earnest, if he had only repented, if he had truly desired deliverance from his sin. But alas! alas! Herod will have to hear from the lips of the Son of God, the awful sentence, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels” (Matt. 25. 41).

“Just One Sin”

Friend, do you realise what an easy thing it is to lose your soul? Just cling *to one sin*; just let *one sin* come between you and God. Possibly some one is saying, “But you mistake the nature of your audience if you think we would stoop to the sin of which Herod was guilty.” Very well, if you know that to be true, if you know that you have never been guilty of these things, never stooped to these things, what other sin is it that is standing between you and your God?

When the Word of God is brought home in power to your soul, and you hear a voice within saying, “*Now* is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2), and conscience says, “Yes, I ought to yield to

God,” what is it that rises before you, and you say, “Oh, *but—but*—if I become a Christian, I cannot go on with that; I cannot do that any more; I will have to give that up, and I am not prepared for that.” You love that sin more than Christ; you love your sin more than a place in Heaven, and, therefore, you will have to sink with your sin into outer darkness, unless God in mercy still gives you repentance.

“Often He has called thee
To accept salvation,
Often He has waited
At thy heart’s closed door;
Outside still He’s standing;
Now His Spirit’s striving.
Will you heed His knocking,
Let Him in today?

“Pardon’s day is passing,
See the light is going,
Heaven’s doors are closing,
Mercy will be gone.
Thy soul’s chance is flying,
Soon thou wilt be dying;
Saints of God are crying,
‘Oh, be saved today!’”

CHAPTER XII

How Judas Iscariot Lost His Soul

“Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place” (Acts 1:25).

THE story of Judas is one of the saddest, and one of the most disappointing that has ever been recorded. Men have tried to make excuses for him.

In the last century an English essayist, THOMAS DE QUINCEY, the author of “Confessions of an English Opium Eater” wrote an essay in which he attempted to show that Peter was far more culpable than Judas because of his base and cowardly behaviour. Judas, according to De Quincey, was simply trying to give his Lord an opportunity to display himself, and assert His Messiahship.

Even so distinguished a theologian as Archbishop WHATELY, of the Anglican Church, took much the same position a few years ago.

That somewhat eccentric novelist, MARIE CORELLI, wrote the book entitled, “Barabbas,” and in that book Judas is almost next to the Christ himself, the hero of the piece. He is described as a man actuated by the highest motives, a lover of his nation, a man who believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and only waiting an opportunity to take the throne of David, to destroy the Roman power, and to give back to the people of Israel their independence, and so, according to Corelli, he took the opportunity of betraying Jesus into the hands of His enemies in order that He might thus assert himself.

Needless to say these views are absolutely opposed to the Divine record. Here we have the very word of the living God. We do not need to theorise as to the motives that actuated Judas. The Holy Spirit Himself has told us plainly enough of what manner of spirit he was.

Many people have been troubled, because the Lord Jesus Christ ever selected Judas to be one of the twelve. There have been various conflicting theories in regard to His motive for doing so. Some have supposed that, because it was foreknown of God that Judas would be the traitor, that he would betray his Lord, the Saviour deliberately chose him, and put him in the place of apostleship in order that he might thus fulfil the Scripture in betraying Him. This would be making Divine foreknowledge a kind of fatalism, and we may be sure that our Lord Jesus Christ had no such motive. Others have gone to the other extreme and supposed that the Lord was deceived in Judas, that He never really understood this man, that He thought him to be a better man than he was, and that, therefore, it was a great

disappointment to Him when Judas turned out as he did. One may dismiss that supposition with these words, “He knew what was in man.” No one ever deceived Him, and yet, knowing Judas through and through, He gave him every opportunity.

When I think of Judas, I cannot but believe that in the eyes of his brother apostles, he was a most trustworthy man up to the very last. He was the one Judean of the company. His name, Judas Iscariot, or as given elsewhere, Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, indicates the town from which he came. Iscariot simply means, “man of Kerioth.” He came from that Judean village.

The other eleven disciples were from the northern province of Galilee, but Judas was the one man from the more aristocratic province of the south. Judea boasted of its orthodoxy, and its full Jewish blood, so of all the apostles, Judas was probably the one most looked up to as a man worthy to be included in the cabinet of great David’s greater Son. He was chosen out of them all to be the treasurer of that little company. When we choose a treasurer, we try to select a man of probity, of integrity, of honesty, a thoughtful, careful man, a man above reproach.

I have no doubt that for the three years during which Judas companied with the rest of the apostles, as far as his outward behaviour was concerned, none could say a thing against him. We read that he carried the bag, he was the bursar and disburser to whom the Lord committed the great and holy privilege of ministering to the needy, for our blessed Lord and His disciples did not use for themselves all that went into that bag. We read that certain women, “ministered unto Him o’ their substance.” Evidently a great many others did the same thing, and thus provided for them as they itinerated through the country. And the Lord Jesus Christ delighted to meet the needs of others out of what was in the collection for Him.

The Apostle Paul, on one occasion, reminded the saints at Ephesus of “the words of our Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” You will never find those words in any of the four Gospels; you never read in the Gospels that Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive, ” and yet the apostle in speaking to those Ephesian elders said, “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). This was part of the tradition, the accepted tradition of the early church. Everywhere the Gospel went, men told how when Jesus was here on earth, it was customary for Him to say, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” The tense of the original implies this: “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He was *wont to say*, (*i.e.*, He was in the habit of saying), It is more blessed to give than to receive.” I fancy He never gave healing to a man, but He said something like that; He never restored sight to the blind, but He made some similar remark, and never whispered to Judas, “You might help that poor person yonder,” but what He

would add, "Remember, it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Think of the high and holy privileges that pertain to the ministry committed to Judas. He was one of the twelve, chosen out of all the other friends of Christ to be with Him, honoured by the title "Apostle," sent one, messenger,—commissioned by the Lord to carry His Word to the people of Israel. He was one who had very intimate association with the Lord; He was entrusted with the money that was committed to them, and also with the spending of it. He had the privilege of hearing the most marvellous ministry that was ever given forth in this world. He listened that day when the Lord Jesus preached that wonderful Sermon on the Mount; he heard Him unfold His many parables of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of God; he saw His Lord time after time as He bowed in prayer and commended His disciples to the Father, that He might watch over and preserve them. He was so close to the Lord Jesus that he knew who He was, and he was certain that He was the promised Messiah. This was Judas, yet he lost his soul!

You and I may say, "Oh, if we could but have privileges like that; if we could but hear the words of the Son of God; if we did not have to be dependent upon His poor, feeble, human messengers who at the very best come so far short of what He, the blessed Saviour of men, must have been, when He was preaching here in the world; if we could have listened to His words, then these cold hearts of ours would be moved; then we would respond to Him; then undoubtedly we would be saved. We are lost because we have not had the privileges that we might have had!"

My dear friend, the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility, and the greater the privilege, the more is accentuated the true condition of the heart of man. Judas had all these privileges; he was treated with wondrous kindness and confidence by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostolic band; and yet he lost his soul. What was the reason? Why was it that this man failed to profit under such wonderful ministry, and that he went out at last a suicide into a lost eternity? I think we may find the trouble very readily as we carefully examine the record.

All through his life there was one sin that Judas had never judged; there was one sin that controlled his inmost being, and in a large measure dictated his behaviour, and that was the sin of covetousness. Covetousness made him a thief during those three years that he companied with the Lord, and covetousness made him a traitor at the last. You remember the Word of God says, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (A.V.). I do not think the Greek text will exactly bear that translation. Most scholars are agreed that it should not be rendered quite so strong as that. Instead of "The love of money is *the* root," it is generally translated, "the love of money is *a* root for all evil." It simply means that if a man loves money, if he is seeking personal gain, every other kind of iniquity can be grafted on to that root.

Years ago I was setting out a little orchard. My home was in Fruitvale, California, just outside of Oakland, and having a rather large lot, I was very much interested in setting out a number of fruit trees. A man came to sell me some trees, and he said, "The best thing you can do is to use trees that have been grafted upon a wild peach root." We were troubled by gophers, and the wild peach root is so bitter that gophers will not eat it. It is also a suitable root upon which to graft a great many different trees. So in my little orchard I had almond trees, Japanese plum trees, and our ordinary plum trees, German prunes, and two or three kinds of apricots and peaches, all grafted on wild peach roots, and they all flourished. The love of money is something like that. It is that which once it is embedded in the heart of a man may be a suitable root into which to graft every kind of iniquity. If you are a lover of money, you may be willing like Judas to commit theft in order to add to your income. You remember the man who wrote to his son, "My son, get money, honestly if you can, but by all means get money." That is the principle of the covetous man, and that was the sin of Judas.

Judas carried the bag, and we are told, "He bare what was put therein." That word "bare" looks innocent enough, but the meaning of it is really, "he bare *away* what was put therein." That is, when people made contributions, and they were put into the bag, before the money was counted out by the rest, Judas slipped a certain amount of it into his own bag. He abstracted some of it. He was a thief, and he bare away what was put therein. Just imagine that man, that covetous man, that thief, that dishonest man, sitting day after day under the ministry of the blessed Christ of God, and yet never converted.

"Why," you say, "do you not think Judas ever was a child of God?" Oh no, the Lord Jesus makes that very plain. He says, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a *devil*?" He did not say, "One of you is in danger of becoming a devil." The word "devil" means a false accuser, a traitor, and Judas is distinctly called, "Judas the *traitor*." But his treachery and his evil speaking grew out of that one sin of covetousness, and that was the sin that kept the Word of God from ever finding lodgement in his soul.

If, as Judas listened to some of those wonderful sermons of the Lord Jesus; if, as he listened to those wonderful stories; if, as he heard of that rich man who said, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? . . . I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:17-20); if conscience had only become active as Judas listened to those words; if he had only heeded the voice of the Holy Spirit, and had said to himself, "Yes, I, too, am in danger of being lost eternally, because of covetousness," and had sought out the Lord, and bared

his breast to Him, and said, “Blessed Master, Thou hast chosen me to be one of Thy apostles; outwardly I have behaved myself, and, perhaps, none of my fellow apostles have guessed the secret sin that has been eating into my very being, which unless judged is going to destroy me for ever; but I come to Thee now, although so late; I come to Thee to confess that all the time I have been with Thee I have been a corrupt, unprincipled, wicked man; I have been a covetous man; I have been a dishonest man; I have been stealing out of the treasury of the Lord. O Christ of God, is there forgiveness for a man like me?”

How different the history of Judas might have been! Depend upon it, there would have been salvation even for him if he would have faced his sin in the presence of God, before he crossed over the dead line, and it was too late.

I wonder if any of you are in danger of being lost eternally by the same sin that damned Judas. Has the love of money gripped your heart? Are you, too, allowing yourself to stoop to things that are discreditable and dishonest in business, possibly in your dealings with others, in order that you may accumulate wealth? Remember, some day that money will burn your very soul, as though it were fire. We read, “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death” (Prov. 21:6). And again we are told that, “He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool” (Jer. 17:11). Judas put money in the place of Christ; he put money in the place of his own salvation, and lost the money at last, and lost also his soul.

When you come to the closing hours of Judas’ life, what a solemn picture you have. Jesus has come down to Jerusalem for the last time, and has been saying things that have perplexed Judas; he cannot understand what the Lord has in mind. He has been speaking of dying, of rising again in three days, of being rejected by the chief priests and by the elders, and Judas said, “What, is this going to be the end of all our expectations? If He is rejected and put to death, what about those of us who have kept company with Him? What chance will we have?” And Judas made up his mind that he would get out from under, as we say today, while the getting was good.

He sought out the chief priest and said, “Tell me, what will you give me if I betray Him to you?” Out of the sin of covetousness came the other sin of putting self in the place of Christ.” What will you give *ME* if I betray Him unto you?” So they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. You say, “Was that a very large amount of money?” Not very large. In the Old Testament it is the price of an ox, or of a slave. If a man had inadvertently killed a slave, he was to pay to the master thirty pieces of silver. That is what Judas obtained for betraying the Lord. There is many a one today who is betraying Him for less than that. Thirty pieces of silver—that is a fortune

compared with what some are getting for the betrayal of the Christ of God. When you think of people selling Jesus for a little paltry worldly pleasure, selling their hope of Heaven for some brief carnal enjoyment, selling their souls for sensual delight, you have something of far less value than thirty pieces of silver.

Try to imagine Judas making his bargain, and then coming back into the very presence of the Son of God, trying to look as though nothing had happened, taking his place with the rest as though he were a lover of Jesus. Conscience at times would try to rouse him, but he had refused to listen to its voice until it became seared as with a hot iron. And even that last night he went with the rest of the apostles to that upper room where the Lord Jesus ate the Passover. He, possibly, partook of that mystic feast that told of the sacrificial offer of the true Lamb of God, though doubtless he did not understand it, and there he received the last act of kindness at the hand of his blessed Lord. Jesus washed his feet in a basin of water, and wiped them with a towel wherewith He was girded. Think of His love, His amazing grace! He knew what had taken place; He knew of the visit to the chief priests; He knew of the bargain that had been struck, and yet He would see whether this last act of love would break down this godless hardened rebel. He washed his feet, taking the place of a slave to do His recreant apostle service; and then, in order to arouse conscience, and to let him know that He knew what had taken place, He said as He looked sorrowfully around, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you shall betray me?" I think Judas' heart began to thump at that, and he thought, "Is He going to expose me before the rest of them?" But no, Jesus was not going to expose; Jesus was giving Judas *one last opportunity* to expose the corruption of his own heart, to confess his own sin, and still get right with God, but Judas sat and listened; he even leaned forward and said with the blindest kind of effrontery, as the others put the same question, "Lord, is it I?" Then Jesus, seeing that all hope of reaching that man was now for ever gone, said, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot" (John 13:26). And Judas having received the sop went out immediately, and it was night.

Jesus said, as he left the room, "That thou doest, do quickly." And the other apostles did not understand. They thought He was referring to some act of loving kindness, possibly ministering to the poor, or providing something for their food for the morrow during the Passover week. But Judas knew, and with those words ringing in his ears he went out— *and it was night!*

Night, blacker and darker than he had ever known, had settled down upon Judas' soul. It was not merely that the sun of the universe had withdrawn itself, and this earthly light was hidden from him, but it was night in his soul, for now Judas is given up, and he has become the son of perdition. There is

no longer hope; he has crossed the dead line. He sought out the chief priest, and said, "I know where He is. He has gone from the supper to Gethsemane's garden. I have often been with Him there."

If the chief priest had said, "And what did He do when He was there?" Judas would have replied, "He would kneel on the ground and pray; He would pray for me, for my fellow disciples, for you and for the nation of Israel. I know where He will be; I know what He will be doing."

But all this failed to move him. Scripture says, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). Every time you hear the Word of God, and refuse to admit Christ into your heart it becomes harder; every time your sin is brought home to your conscience, and you refuse to judge it, it becomes easier to go on in sin. This hardening process had been going on in Judas' life for three years, and now his heart will never be moved to penitence again.

You know the rest of the story of how he led that company out to Gethsemane. Jesus had hardly risen from that awful agony of prayer when the sweat as great drops of blood fell from His brow, as He pleaded with the Father on our behalf, and said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Judas met Him, and whispered to those with him, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast" (Matt. 26:48). And he went boldly forward, made his way into the company of the disciples, right up to the blessed Saviour, and without a tremor said, "HAIL, MASTER," and he dared to kiss Him. Jesus, instead of calling down the fires of divine judgment upon him, said, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" But there was no answering response in the heart of Judas. *He was out for thirty pieces of silver.*

His Lord is led away to die; the dreadful scenes of Calvary are enacted. And Judas, what of him? At last his conscience is awakened, but without penitence, without confession to God, without true repentance, for the word that is translated "repent" there simply means that Judas was filled with *remorse*, when at last he realised what he had actually done, and he came like a crazed man into the presence of the chief priest, and threw down the thirty pieces of silver for which he had sold his Lord, and his soul, and he said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

But his heart never turned to God, never cried to Him for mercy; he simply acknowledged the awful blunder he had made. The priest turned coldly away and said, "What is that to us, see thou to it." And Judas rushed out of their presence with his brain on fire, maddened as he realised what he had done, and going to the edge of the cliff, if tradition teaches us aright, he found a gnarled tree, and with a noose hung himself to the limb. As his body dropped into space, the noose broke, and his body was torn to pieces, and thus you have the two distinct accounts of his death reconciled, "he hung

himself,” and “he was torn asunder.”

Judas, lost, lost for ever, because of one unjudged sin.

If you are still out of Christ, what is the sin that is keeping you from giving heed to the Gospel message? Have you been moved by the Spirit of God at different times to desire to know the salvation of the Lord, and has something seemed to say to you, “If you should become a Christian, you would have to give up this, and that, and the other thing? You would have to confess the wrong that you did to this one and to that one?” It is not that you have to do these things. If you become a Christian, you will be glad to face everything in the presence of God, and seek to put things right, but God is not calling upon you to put things right before you come to Him. He is calling on you to *receive* His Son, and depend upon it, when you do that, you will want to have things right with man.

Recently a man was brought to know Christ, and a few weeks ago he came to one of my associates and said, “Now that I know the Lord, I want to be out and out for Christ, but there is something I will have to straighten up. I was a soldier in the Army, and got into trouble. They put me into prison, but I broke away with others, and deserted, and I have been dodging the officers. But now God has found me, and saved me; and I want to be right with men.”

So, at his own request, my associate took him back to the officials of the government, and there like a man he went in and told his story and said, “I have come back to give myself up.” They put him under arrest, and his case is now being taken up. The very next day as they put him to work on the rock pile, he brought the man who worked beside him to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a missionary even though he has gone to prison.

You know what sin is keeping you from Christ. We saw that the sin which kept Herod from Him was the sin of *licentiousness*, of impurity, that sin that is damning so many millions of men and women today. It is clear that the sin that ruined Pontius Pilate was the sin of worldly *ambition*, and now we have the awful picture of Judas Iscariot damned because of *covetousness*.

What Is YOUR Sin?

You may try to excuse it; you may say, “After all, it is a little thing,” but, if it keeps you from coming to Christ, it will keep you out of heaven, and you won’t think it a little thing in eternity. Then you will say, “What a fool I have been.”

Will you not face your sin in the presence of God? Jesus died for it whatever it is, and if you will only come to Him as a penitent sinner, and put

your trust in Him, there is no sin you have ever committed that can rise again between your soul and God.” The Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Will you come to Him?” To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name *whosoever* believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). WILL YOU COME?

Suppose you do not. How will you like to have to spend eternity with Herod the impure, with Pilate the ambitious, with Judas Iscariot, the covetous traitor? That must be your doom if you refuse the salvation that God is offering.