

SELECTION
OF
THE MOST CELEBRATED
SERMONS
OF
M. LUTHER AND J. CALVIN,
EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL, AND PRINCIPAL LEADERS IN
THE
PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

(NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES.)

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
A BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY
OF
THEIR LIVES.

NEW-YORK:
COMPILED AND PUBLISHED BY R. BENTLEY.
FOR SALE BY G. & C. & H. CARVILL.

1829.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN offering this selection of Sermons to the publick, the publisher has not been governed by Sectarian principles, but has selected Sermons upon various subjects, that the reader may understand the general doctrine held forth by those eminent divines. When we consider the mental darkness which enveloped the world in the days of Luther and Calvin, under Popish superstition and idolatry, and that theirs were some of the first attempts to emancipate the human intellect from more than “Egyptian darkness,” the reader will undoubtedly censure lightly any defects that may appear in their discourses; considering their great object to have been, the removal of that servile yoke of papistry under which *nations* were groaning, and of bringing mankind into the liberty of the gospel.

Calvin’s Sermons were translated and published in England, about the year 1580; since which date we have no account of an edition having been published. Luther’s Sermons, after having been translated, were published in the year 1581, and re-published in 1649. In consequence of the imperfection of the English Language when these Sermons were formerly published, it was found necessary to revise them, and correct the language; but in so doing, particular care has been taken to preserve precisely the original meaning.

Southern District of New-York, ss.

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FRED. J. BETTS,

*Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.
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SERMON IV.

Mat. I. *From the 1st to the 16th verse, inclusive,*

- 1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
- 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;
- 3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;
- 4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;
- 5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;
- 6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias;
- 7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;
- 8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;
- 9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;
- 10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;
- 11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:
- 12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;
- 13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;
- 14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;
- 15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;
- 16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

THIS is the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. The sum of this text is, first, Matthew begins his book with a title or inscription by which the believer is enticed with greater pleasure to hear and read it: for he saith this much in effect; whom the law and prophets have hitherto promised and preached, Jesus, that is, a Saviour; and Christ, that is, an eternal King; that he, according to the promise of God, should come forth from the seed of Abraham and David: even him do I describe in this book; to wit, that he is now born and made man, and already come into the world. Secondly, three lines or degrees are here rehearsed; in the first, is contained the stock of the *fathers*; in the second, of the kings; and in the third, the decaying stock of David. After the decay, it was necessary that Christ should come; for in this manner we often witness the goodness of God; when all things seem past hope and recovery, then comes relief.

We shall now attend to the exposition of the text. When Adam our first father had fallen by a notable offence, and became guilty of death, with all his children, both in body and soul, there was notwithstanding a promise made to him, although obscurely, that both he and his posterity should be delivered; this promise is contained in those words which God spake to the serpent; Gen. iii. 15. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and

between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Of these words Adam took comfort, that a woman should come, by whose fruit, this guile and subtlety of the serpent should be amended, and himself redeemed. This comfort upheld him and his posterity until Noah. Then the promise was renewed; when God made a covenant with the sons of Noah, and set a rainbow for a sign of the covenant, whereby man might conceive a trust and confidence, that God is yet favourable unto them, and doth not purpose their destruction: whereby man was again upheld and comforted until Abraham.

In the time of Abraham, God showed his mercy, by declaring that he would send a Saviour who should again deliver us from death, both body and soul: for although the body must die, yet it will not always remain in death, but will rise again with the Lord Christ. God spake thus to Abraham, Gen. xxii. “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Here miserable men had a cause to hope and look for a Saviour that should deliver them. From that time did all the prophets foretell of this fountain of all mercy, the Lord Christ; how that he should come, and that all who believed in him might obtain salvation by that promise which cannot be revoked.

If men will open their eyes, they must needs confess that something strange has taken place; that man being in a state of damnation, under a desperate curse, should be restored by the nativity of one man. Wherefore the prophets cried out with ardent prayers and unspeakable groanings, that God would vouchsafe to send the Saviour whom he had promised. By faith in this Saviour the Israelites obtained the law, and this honour before all people; that they were called the chosen people of God: and by this faith, all obtained salvation from Abraham to David, even as many as were saved.

In the time of David, God made the coming of the Messiah to be more manifestly declared; that it might with certainty be known of what stock he should come: namely, of the stock of David. God said unto David, 2 Samuel vii. 12, “When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son.” He likewise saith, Psalm cxxxii. 11, “The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.” Here Christ is described, that he shall be a king; and an eternal king, as is mentioned of him in Psalm xlv. 6. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.”

This is a spiritual king, who rules the world by his word; and whosoever receiveth his word, pertaineth to his kingdom. But he that is not subject to this sceptre, neither heareth his word, is not of God, neither pertaineth to his kingdom; but is subject to the kingdom of Satan; under whose tyranny we all are, until the Lord delivers us from it, and defends us with his sceptre; which

is done when we believe in him. Therefore, as our salvation comes merely by the promise of God, let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind, that he will never obtain salvation without this promise. Should he do the works of all the saints, they would profit him nothing: but, on the contrary, if we lay hold on the sceptre of this king, that is, the promise of God, we shall not perish, though the sins of the whole world should lie upon us; they shall all be swallowed up in him.

We have an example of this in the thief, who was hung by the side of our Lord on the cross; he laid hold on the word of God, and believed in Christ, and therefore obtained the promised paradise. Here is no doubt left; let us only believe that it is so, and it is so indeed: all things which we have done or can do, being set aside. All things must give place, at the coming of this new king, that he alone may rule and reign in us. Let a man think of these things which are written of this new king, as being his own matters, and as pertaining all to himself. For whatsoever is written of Christ, is written for our comfort, that we may thereby feed and cherish our faith. To the establishing of this faith, God hath mercifully left us his written promise, and suffered it to be published; and therefore he will surely perform that which he hath promised.

Let us now come more particularly to our present text, which pierceth the heart by force, and poureth into it love, pleasure, joy and gladness: as if an angel should come from heaven, and say unto us miserable and condemned wretches, "Behold, O man, thou hast sinned, wherefore thou hast deserved condemnation forever. (This being heard, the heart must needs tremble.) Although all this be true, nevertheless God of his grace hath mercy upon us, and sendeth us a Saviour, as he promised to Abraham and his seed. Be of good cheer, and give thanks to God! Lo, here is the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, who is the son of David, the son of Abraham. This is not only done, but also written, that we may be certain thereof. He will not deceive; only believe, and thou shalt have all things."

Matthew setteth David before Abraham, although the promise was first made to Abraham, and came afterwards to David, The promise made to David, the prophets afterwards published more abroad, and by it comforted the people. The prophet saith, Isa. xi. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." And likewise it is said, Jer. xxiii. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth." And many other such prophecies are to be found in the writings of the prophets. The angel likewise declared to Mary; saying, Luke i. 32, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Wherefore Matthew thought proper to set David first, as being better known; and next Abraham, unto whom the

promise was first made: as Mary in her song saith, Luke i. 54. "He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham; and to his seed forever." That promise is now performed, and in our text described, as we shall see hereafter.

St. Matthew maketh a triple difference of *fathers*, of whom Christ came; fourteen *patriarchs*, fourteen *kings*, and fourteen *princes*. It was necessary that the sceptre and kingdom should be taken from Judah, according to the prophecy of Jacob; which is thus; Gen. xlix. 10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." There are thrice fourteen generations, as Matthew rehearsed them: from Abraham to David, fourteen generations; from David till they were carried away into Babylon, fourteen generations; there is a person omitted in Matthew; that is, *Jakim*: it ought to be written thus, Josias begat Jakim, and Jakim begat Jechonias and his brethren; this the Chronicles witness. And after they were carried away into Babylon, until Christ, fourteen generations: which triple distinction hath a great mystery, as we shall notice.

The Jews among other laws were commanded to observe these three precepts; namely, to worship that God whom their fathers worshipped; to choose no priest of any other stock but their own, that is, of the tribe of Levi; and to choose no king but of their own people. These three precepts did very well agree in our Lord Christ; to wit, that he is the one God; that he is an eternal priest, who continually maketh intercession for us; and a king, our brother, who hath taken our nature upon him, who by his divine power is able to help and save us; he is king also that he may defend and preserve us. If this priest did not stand before God, who would be able to stand in the sight of his Creator and not be terrified? who would defend us if he were not king? who would save us if he were not God? how could he have care of us if he were not man, and our brother? O most gracious Saviour, how wisely hast thou done all things; I know that thou art my brother; as it is said in Psalm xxii. 22. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." And again in the epistle to the Hebrews, although thou art God, the Lord Jesus Christ, King of heaven and earth, yet I can not be afraid of thee; for thou art my friend and brother.

It is no hindrance to us, because we are sinners, and Christ holy; for if we had not been sinners, there would be no need that Christ should suffer for us. We see in his genealogy that both good and evil are rehearsed, of whose posterity he should come; that weak and timorous consciences might be comforted, that they might confidently and cheerfully put their trust in him who has taken away our sins. That we may be certain of this, he has left us his word, which assuredly declares it to us. Among the kings and princes that Matthew rehearsed, some were exceedingly evil, as we may read in the books of the kings; yet God suffereth them to be rehearsed in his genealogy, as if they were worthy that he should come to them.

Likewise four women are named, all of whom had an evil report. As Thamar, of whom Judah the father of her husband begat Pharez and Zarah. Gen. xxxviii. Rahab is called a harlot in the book of Joshua; Ruth was a heathen woman, of whom, although no evil was written, yet she was despised and detested by the Jews. Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was an adulteress before she was married to David, and of her he begat Solomon. These women are undoubtedly rehearsed, that we may see how God hath set forth, as it were, a looking glass to sinners; that they may see that he would be born of the posterity of sinners; that the chief of sinners might trust in him, and flee to him for refuge. He is our God, priest, and king; in whom only we are able to fulfil the law, and obtain the grace of God.

Christ requires us to believe that he came down from heaven, that he is our God, priest, and king. By him alone we become the sons of God, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom; as St. Paul saith, Gal. iii. 26. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Here the hearts of all sinners may leap for joy, that they are counted worthy of such a Saviour. Must not he needs be regenerate, whose heart understandeth and feeleth this? yea, he is enticed by an ardent desire and love to lead a new life? for he is inspired with the grace of God, and layeth hold of the promise of the remission of all his sins.

The number of persons rehearsed in this text, is forty-two; which is the number of mansion places occupied by the children of Israel, before they entered into the promised land; as written in the fourth book of Moses. If we also will come into the promised land, which our Lord Jesus Christ hath prepared for us by his nativity, we must also occupy two and forty mansion places; that is, we must cease from our own purpose, and be regenerate man by man, and thereby come to Jesus where we shall find rest to our souls. But this nativity is hard, as our evil and corrupt nature is loth to leave its own will and purpose. The case of nature is such, that no nativity can take place without grief; yet one hath more grief, temptation and affliction than another. The thief on the cross came suddenly to Christ; so did many martyrs, and other holy men.

We must go faithfully from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, &c. We must begin at Abraham that we may be found endued with like faith, and obtain the blessing promised to him: then we shall more easily and cheerfully go from one patriarch to another; that is, we shall pass over one affliction after another, until we end the journey of life, and are called unto our rest. For a man must be exercised with afflictions, and renounce his own will, until he be brought under, and his flesh subdued; that it may obey the spirit, and walk joyfully in the will and obedience of God.

Wherefore let no man think of himself, to get to heaven by leading a quiet life, and following pleasure. Christ saith, Luke xviii. 25. "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the

kingdom of God.” And in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul teacheth, that through great tribulation we enter into the kingdom of God. Again, Abraham saith to the rich man, Luke xvi. 25. “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” It was also necessary that Christ should suffer, and by the cross enter into his glory. And St. Paul saith, 2 Tim. iii. 12. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.” Here we may learn that all is poison which is according to the lusts of the flesh: wherefore Paul saith to the Romans, viii. 13. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” The spirit which is of God, is ready to suffer, but the flesh resisteth.

This Jesus signified by his answer to Peter: when he showed to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Jews, and be slain also. When Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee; Jesus turned, and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. It is here manifest that the reason of man strives against the will of God. God will have us enter into glory by the cross and persecution; but the flesh resisteth, and is troubled in affliction. Moreover, they that are endued with the spirit of God, rejoice if they be afflicted for his sake; as it is written of the apostles; Acts v. 41. “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

James saith in his epistle, chap. i. 2. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” O how necessary is patience for a Christian! We must enter into a new kind of life; and if calamity comes, we must not burst forth into evil speeches, and take it impatiently, but we must lift our hearts to God, and bear affliction with a patient mind; he will deliver us when it seemeth good to him. We must always think that he bears a fatherly affection toward us; even when he sends persecution, anguish, affliction, and adversity; as Hebrews xii. 5. “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children: my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.” God give us his divine grace that we may courageously pass through all afflictions and temptations, and with the Lord Christ be regenerate into a new life. Amen.