THE

**THEOLOGICAL WORKS**

OF THE

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CONTAINING

THE FORCE OF TRUTH,—TREATISE ON REPENTANCE,—GROWTH IN GRACE, SERMON ON ELECTION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE,—SERMONS ON SELECT SUBJECTS,—ESSAYS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN RELIGION, AND THE NATURE AND WARRANT OF FAITH IN CHRIST.

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EDINBURGH:

THOMAS NELSON AND PETER BROWN.

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SERMON VII.

THE DANGER OF REJECTING THE GOSPEL.

PSALM ii. 12.

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

Whatever were the immediate occasion of this psalm, it evidently con­tains a most remarkable prophecy concerning Christ, and the divine ven­geance to be inflicted on those who opposed the establishment of his king­dom. The Jews were the peculiar objects of the threatened indignation; and they are also the witnesses of the authenticity of those Scriptures, in which the prophecy is contained; for by them the Old Testament has been preserved; and they now unanimously attest that the psalm before us was written at least a thousand years before Jesus of Nazareth was born.

It may therefore be useful in the first place to call your attention to this remarkable prophecy of things already accomplished, or hastening to an ac­complishment.—“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed.” Let us hear the apostle’s ap­plication of this passage: “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, to do *whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*” Acts iv. 25. 28. These conclud­ing words are well worthy of our notice: as they illustrate the plan of di­vine providence in the government of the world. We are apt to wonder, that wicked men should be permitted to triumph as they often do; not con­sidering that the Lord employs even rebels to fulfil his righteous purposes; and that, contrary to their own intention, they are made the executioners of his vengeance, or used as his chastening rod. Even atheists and infidels, yea, the haughtiest and most self-willed of his enemies, are permitted to prosper, till they have inflicted condign punishment on sinners, perhaps less criminal than themselves, and then they are consigned to more tremendous vengeance.—Nay, the Lord even makes use of wicked men to accomplish his designs of mercy to the church. Thus the Jewish rulers and priests, with Herod, Pilate, and the people of Israel, though before at enmity with each other, combined together against the Saviour of the world: they thought evil against him and his church, “but the Lord meant it for good.” Genesis 1. 20. And they could only do what “his hand and counsel had determined before to be done.”

“The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed,” or his Messiah: “saying, Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us.” All the power and policy of man seemed to be leagued together, with a fixed determination to destroy Jesus, and extirpate his doctrine.—His numerous and formidable enemies unanimously resolved that “they would not have this man to reign over them.” The priests and rulers excited the people to demand his crucifixion with unrelenting vehemence. They aimed to blot out the remembrance of him and his spiritual dominion from the earth, that they might have no authority but that of the magistrate. “We have no king but Cæsar; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.” Observe, my brethren, what was their principal objection to the religion of Jesus, and whence it arose. They hated the law and government of God; and therefore they rebelled against the kingdom and authority of his Son. Thus men still reject the gospel, be­cause it magnifies and honours the law and justice of God, condemns all their former transgressions, and with the proposal of a gracious pardon, implies an obligation to obedience in future: and in this respect the same part is acted over and over again, from generation to generation.

But mark what follows; “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision:” He looks down with contempt and dis­dain upon their puny attempts to subvert his kingdom and counteract his sovereign purposes.—“Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.” Let us see how this prophecy was fulfilled. The Jews crucified the Lord Jesus for declaring that he was the promised Messiah, the Son of God. But behold, he demonstrates himself to be that glorious Redeemer! He dies indeed, but he rises from the dead, ascends into heaven, takes possession of his exalted throne, and sends forth his Spirit upon his apostles, that they may be empowered to establish his reli­gion in the world. The Jewish rulers and people, however, having blas­phemed his miracles and condemned him to the cross, persist in their en­mity, oppose his ambassadors, and persecute his harmless disciples.—But what is the consequence?—The gospel rapidly gains ground; persecution drives believers into remote regions, to convey the glad tidings to mankind; the dying martyrs, confirming their testimony by their harmless lives and patient sufferings, show the excellency of their principles, and expose the odious cruelty of their adversaries. At length the day of vengeance ar­rives: he that sitteth in the heavens had poured contempt upon his im­potent foes, and triumphed gloriously, notwithstanding their feeble though determined opposition: but now, “he speaks to them in his wrath, and vexes them in his sore displeasure.” Jerusalem is surrounded by the Ro­man legions, the executioners of the sentence which had been pronounced: miseries till then unknown are inflicted on the devoted nation; eleven hundred thousand persons perish in the siege; the survivors are sold for slaves, till no more purchasers can be found; the city and temple are en­tirely destroyed, and the sacred hill of Zion given up to be henceforth “trodden under foot of the gentiles,” according to another memorable prophecy, which hath now been fulfilling for near one thousand eight hundred years! Luke xxi. 24. An apostate emperor attempts, in defiance of Christ, to re­build the temple and restore the Jews; but his design is frustrated by earth­quakes, and the signal interposition of heaven: while the Jews themselves, scattered through all nations, and almost everywhere oppressed, are reluc­tant witnesses to the truth of the Scriptures, and monuments of divine ven­geance on the despisers of the gospel.

The Roman emperors also exerted their extensive and absolute authority in opposing the establishment of Christianity; and it is remarkable, that several of those, who are celebrated for *virtue,* were the most determined persecutors!—But what was the event? from that time this mighty empire was undermined, and at length Christianity was established, as it were, upon its ruins!

It would not be a difficult task to show, from the history of succeeding ages, that God hath fulfilled his promise, in maintaining his church against the most virulent rage of her numerous and powerful enemies; according to the next words of this prophecy, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion and the event will be the same with all other rulers and nations, who set themselves to oppose the kingdom of Christ.—For a season they may pros­per, boast, and blaspheme; and say, with Sennacherib, to the servants of the Lord, “Let not your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Ye shall not be delivered into my hands.—Behold ye have heard what I have done unto all lands, and shall ye be delivered?”—But God will answer them, as he did the proud Assyrian, “I know thy abode, and thy going out and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into my ears; therefore I will put my hook into thy nose, and my bridle into thy lips; and I will turn thee back by the way in which thou camest.—The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this for he hath said, and he will accomplish it, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” Isaiah xxxvii. 10, 11, 28–38.

But the prophecy still further expands itself; “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth.” The counsel is addressed to kings, because monarchy was the more general kind of dominion in those ages and nations: but all invested with authority are evidently meant, by whatever titles they may be distinguished. They are the judges of the earth, whose judgment is submitted to in all the secular concerns of mankind. These dignified personages are admonished to be wise, and welcome instruction; especially in respect of the kingdom, which the Lord hath established under the government of his only begotten Son.—It therefore follows, “serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with reverence.”

Submit to the authority of God: bow your sceptres to the sceptre of the Messiah: employ your power and influence, in obeying his commands, and promoting his glory: presume not, in any case, to set your authority in opposition to his, lest he dash you in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Stand in awe of his power, reverence his majesty; and, while you rejoice in your exalted rank, and all its alluring appendages; tremble also, lest they should occasion your deeper condemnation.—“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way; when his wrath is kindled, yea but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

The conclusion of the Psalm is very emphatical; and the turn given to the address may imply far more than is expressed, with the trivial change in the punctuation, above adopted. This is frequently the manner of the sacred writers. “How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?” “What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” The Psalmist having said, “When his wrath is kindled, yea but a little,” breaks off abruptly, as if meant to add, I will not, I cannot describe the misery of that man, against whom the wrath of Christ is kindled in the least degree: I leave the subject as too dreadful to be insisted on; and will ra­ther direct your thoughts to a more delightful consideration; “Blessed are all they, that put their trust in him.”

Having thus briefly reviewed this prophecy, I would again demand your attention to its contents, which are too obvious to need much interpreta­tion, and which involve no ambiguity or uncertainty. Have not these pre­dictions, concerning the opposition of the world to the kingdom of Christ, and his triumph over his enemies, been exactly fulfilled? Have not facts corresponded with the evident meaning of the language here used?

These accomplishments of Scripture, in things which no human sagacity could possibly foresee, are unequivocal demonstrations that it is the word of the omniscient God. Ingenious men may easily start plausible objections, or answer arguments with sarcasm, or repartee; but is this a suitable way of treating subjects of such awful importance? Let the opposers of our holy religion stand forth with manly frankness, and fairly prove if they can, that these prophecies were not delivered a thousand years before the coming of Christ; or else that the events have not corresponded to them. Until one of these things has been undeniably effected, we shall continue to affirm, that, so far from believing without evidence, we have unspeakably better rea­sons to assign for our faith and hope, than unbelievers can have for any of their opinions.

For my own part, after a diligent examination of the subject, during many years, I am fully convinced that the Bible is the infallible word of God; and am thankful that I did not imbibe this sentiment from education or early prejudices, but that it has been the result of a most hesitating investigation: because this gives me a confidence not easily to be shaken, that the gospel will maintain its ground, though all the genius, learning, eloquence, and authority of the whole world should unite against it. Nay, I am assured, that it will survive the ruin of all its enemies; who can only destroy them­selves: for they can neither prevent its progress and triumphs, nor hinder the salvation of the meanest believer; but will at length find, “that it is hard to kick against the pricks.”—The remainder of the present discourse will contain a more particular consideration of the text, in the following method:—

I. We will inquire into the special nature of that kingdom, which God hath determined to establish.

II. Notice the exhortation of the text: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry.”

III. Make some remarks on the warning and encouragement, which close the Psalm—“If his wrath he kindled, yea, but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

I. Then we consider the special nature of the Messiah’s kingdom. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” This was the purpose of God, even when he created the world. He formed the earth to be a theatre, on which he might display his essential glory: and the person, salvation, and kingdom of Emmanuel, constitute the grandest exhibition of all the mysteries and perfections of the divine nature that hath ever been made. All the dispensations of providence have been arranged, in subserviency to the same great design; as it must be evident to everyone, who carefully studies the history of the Old Testament, or indeed the history of the world in every age.

When therefore the tempter had prevailed on our first parents to violate the Creator’s prohibition, the promise of a Saviour was immediately given: “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head:” The Messiah shall overturn the usurped dominion of the devil, and set up his kingdom on the ruins of it; to the final confusion and destruction of that great ringleader in rebellion against the Lord.—The Messiah as the head of this kingdom was foretold in the law of Moses, and the prophets, who “spake of the suf­ferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” 1 Peter i. 10–12. This was the stone seen in vision by Nebuchadnezzar; which was “cut out of the mountain without hands,” and having destroyed all opposition, “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” Dan. ii. 31–48.

In the fulness of time the promised Saviour appears; and his messenger goes before him, proclaiming as a herald, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—Now the ancient prophecies are fulfilled: “The blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised.” “Behold a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” He leads a lowly and suffering life; he goes about doing good: his most beneficent doctrine is confirmed by benign miracles of the most stupendous nature: all his words and works are stamped with divine wisdom, holiness, love, and power. Yet is he “despised and rejected of men.” He dies a spotless sacrifice upon the cross; numbered with male­factors, and treated with extreme contempt, malice and cruelty. He rises from the dead a glorious conqueror, “ascends up on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them.” Psal. lxviii. 18. Now “he receives to himself a kingdom,” “all power in heaven and earth is given to him:” “an­gels, principalities, and powers are made subject to him, and he is made head over all things to his church!” His apostles having received the promise of the Spirit from on high, go forth everywhere preaching the gospel, and de­claring that “the same Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins:” “That there is no salvation in any other; for there is none other name un­der heaven given unto men, whereby we must be saved;” while the miracu­lous powers they exercise and communicate, confirm their testimony, and command attention. Their formidable persecutors are confounded, thou­sands and tens of thousands embrace the religion of the crucified Jesus; till Jewish infidelity, and pagan idolatry, and all the power and policy with which they are supported, fall down before it, as the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, before the stone cut out of the mountain without hands.

In this manner Jehovah attested the despised Jesus to be his well-beloved Son; thus as it were, addressing the Jews, ‘Ye have crucified the Lord of glory, because he said, I am the Son of God; but behold I have raised him from the dead! I have exalted him at my right hand in heavenly places.’ “I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion,” ‘according to my ancient predictions. Now the whole earth shall be his inheritance, whatever ob­stacles or enemies may oppose him. I have undertaken, and I will accom­plish it: all men shall either bow to the sceptre of his grace, and become his willing subjects and redeemed people; or they shall be crushed as obstinate rebels under his feet. This is the determination of the Lord of Hosts.’

A mistaken idea of Christianity seems in this respect to be very preva­lent. Numbers imagine, that it may be very well to believe the gospel, but that there is no *necessity* of so doing; as others may be safe and happy upon their own plans. But the Scripture uses a very different language; Chris­tianity is there considered as the only true religion, and faith in Christ the only way of being saved. This is no unessential matter, in which men may safely embrace opposite opinions: every man who reverences the Bible as the word of God, must own, that no unbeliever can escape final condemna­tion: for the Lord himself hath repeatedly attested it; and “he that believeth not hath made him a liar.” Let it also be observed, that the great object of our faith is likewise constituted our Judge: and it is never inti­mated, that in the decisive hour, he will make any exception in favour of the mighty monarch, the renowned warrior, the busy politician or trades­man, the learned sceptic, or the indolent and inconsiderate trifler. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” One distinction will then swallow up all others: the faithful disciple will sit down with him upon his throne; and all unbelievers will be punished with an everlasting destruction from his presence.

The kingdom of Christ is administered by him in the character of a Me­diator. As soon as sin entered into the world, the Lord made known his purpose of dealing with men, through the intervention of a Peace-maker: in whose person as Emmanuel, and through whose obedience unto the death of the cross, he might honourably show mercy to the transgressors of his holy law. So that they who oppose his kingdom, not only rebel against the authority of God, but despise the riches of his everlasting mercy. To effect our reconciliation to our offended Creator, the eternal Son of God was made partaker of flesh and blood; and having “suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;” he is now ascended into the heavens, as our merciful and faithful High-priest and Advocate. “The go­vernment is upon his shoulders,” that he might be “able to save to the ut­termost all those that come to God through him.” Angels, principalities and powers obey and adore him. “He has the keys of death and hell;” he is King of kings, and Lord of lords.” The kingdom of nature and providence is administered by him as our brother and friend: “all judgment is com­mitted to him “all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.” He is the head of all things to his church, the “fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

How astonishing is this language! How stupendous his grace; who from this height of personal and mediatorial dignity and pre-eminence, looks down in compassion on us sinful worms, and seems only to glory in his power, as it enables him to enrich and bless our guilty souls! He reigns upon a mercy-seat, dispensing pardons and gifts to rebellious men: pardons and gifts, which he purchased for them with his own blood! He proclaims his immeasurable love in the blessed gospel; he sends his Holy Spirit to glorify him in our hearts, receiving of those things which belong to him, and show­ing them to us, in all their suitableness and inestimable value. He invites all that will, to come and take of these blessings freely; he casts out none that come: and he confers all things pertaining to life and godliness on every waiting soul.

With the highest propriety, therefore, angels celebrated the Redeemer’s birth in that expressive song of praise, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill towards men;” for “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” Yet if “men refuse him that speaketh;” if they “despise his counsel, and will none of his reproof;” he will most certainly glorify his power in their destruction. “God hath given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow;—and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” This agrees with the solemn declaration quoted by the apostle, “as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” Isaiah xlv. 21–25. Rom. xiv. 11. Phil. ii. 10, 11.

Let it be likewise observed, that “the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light.” Not only are all his subjects made heirs of heaven; they have “also the promise of the life that now is;” the full assurance that no good thing shall be withholden from them, and they shall receive an hun­dred fold even in this present time, for all the losses they sustain from love to Christ and the gospel.

II. Then let us notice the exhortation of the text: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way:” that is, ‘submit and be re­conciled to him, before the day of vengeance overtake you.’

This implies, in the first place, submission to the righteousness of God, and a humble acceptance of mercy in his appointed way. We cannot come to the Saviour, except in the character of lost sinners. We are therefore re­quired to humble ourselves before God, and to allow the justice of his awful sentence: and we must not in any measure excuse our crimes, or expect de­liverance from wrath, and the gift of eternal life, as in any degree our due. The Scripture nowhere warrants a sinner to come in this spirit, or to ad­vance such a plea. “Wilt thou,” says Jehovah, “condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” Job xl. 8. This was precisely the case of the ancient Jews; “they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to es­tablish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righ­teousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Rom. x. 3, 4.

There are two principal reasons of men’s rejecting the gospel. In gene­ral they hate religion, and desire to live without restraint. They take plea­sure in worldly objects: and if not compelled by their circumstances to la­bour, or engaged in covetous or ambitious pursuits; they love to spend their time and money in gratifying their own humour and inclinations: but sub­mission to Christ is absolutely contrary to such a course of life. When, however, this seems to be in a measure got over; and men take a nearer view of Christianity; they are greatly offended at its humiliating doctrines. To come before God as dependent creatures might be tolerable: but to ap­proach him as justly condemned criminals, is too great a degradation to be endured; especially when connected with self-denial and renunciation of their darling pursuits. A method of salvation, which paid more respect to their wisdom, learning, or other distinctions, and especially to their *virtue and goodness of heart,* would meet with a better reception. To speculate and decide as philosophers, to perform duties by their native energies and good dispositions, and to demand a reward of their distinguished piety and cha­rity, would better suit their feelings; than to be saved by grace alone; to sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, to give the Lord the glory of every good desire, thought, word, and action; to rely on the all-sufficient merits and atoning blood of the Saviour, and to receive eternal life as the gift of God in him. Yet the text, compared with the general tenor of Scripture, requires this unreserved submission of sinners to divine justice, and reliance on free mercy and grace, as essential to salvation.

But it also demands from us implicit obedience to the Saviour, as the anointed king over his redeemed people, and over all worlds for their advan­tage. “Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way.” When Samuel anointed Saul king over Israel, he testified his cheerful and cordial acquiescence in the Lord’s appointment, by the kiss of allegiance. In like manner, we are not only required to welcome the salvation of Christ with unfeigned gratitude, and to express our love by obedience *in some par­ticulars;* reserving to ourselves a *choice,* because we are children, not slaves: but we are called upon to submit to his authority, and yield obedience in all things; and if our repentance, faith, and love, be sincere, we shall cordially render it, only lamenting the imperfection of our most upright and self-de­nying services. Our past sins will appear to us, as acts of rebellion against our Sovereign and bounteous Creator; present failures will be considered as additional provocations, which need forgiveness through the atoning blood; and our obedience, as the only undeniable evidence of our repentance and conversion. We shall regard every interest or obedience which would draw us aside, as an idol and usurper; every contrary propensity as the remains of our old bondage; and the path of duty as true liberty, the perfection of which we shall long after with groans and tears.

But further, the text commands us, “to honour the Son even as we ho­nour the Father that sent him.” 1 John v. 23. Thus the worshippers of Baal *kissed* his image, and the idolatrous votaries of the golden calves used the same ceremony. 1 Kings xix. 18. Hos. xiii. 2. Jehovah therefore seems to say in the words of the text, ‘I demand for my beloved Son that very ado­ration, which I prohibited and abhorred when offered unto idols.’ When our Lord had said, “I and my Father are One,” the Jews accused him of making himself equal with God; and their renewed attempt to stone him, together with the immediate cause of his condemnation to the cross, proves that he neither denied nor evaded the charge. On this point, he and the Jews were at issue; for this supposed crime he suffered and died: but “he was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead.” And he who carefully examines the account given of the worship rendered to “the Lamb that was slain,” by redeemed sinners, an innume­rable multitude of angels, and all creatures, as made known in vision to the apostle, will not be able to mark any difference between it, and the adora­tion paid to “Him who sitteth on the throne, and liveth for ever and ever.” Rev. v. 6. It cannot therefore be wonderful, if the disciples of Christ on earth, should be required to learn the worship of heaven, as a part of their “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.”—But it is time for us to proceed to the remaining part of the subject, and,

III. Make some remarks, on the warning and encouragement, which close the psalm: “If his wrath be kindled, yea but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

What is this but a declaration, that ‘if you refuse the salvation of Christ, reject his authority, and deny him the honour due to him, his love will be turned into fiery indignation, and he will glorify his name in taking ven­geance on his despisers, as well as in saving and blessing his humble dis­ciples?’—With allusion to the day of judgment, it is said, “The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains: and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand.” Rev. vi. 15–17. Observe the words, “*the wrath of the Lamb,*” the wrath, not only of an offended King and Judge, but also of a despised Saviour. This will enhance the guilt and con­demnation of those who neglect the gospel, and render their condemnation more intolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Our attention should likewise be peculiarly fixed on the expression, “If his wrath be kindled, *yea but a little,*”*—*that is, ‘should you be found among the more plausible and moderate of those, who refuse submission to the Sa­viour; among those who have least provoked his indignation; your doom will yet be very tremendous.’ This comes home to the case of multitudes. Many persons readily express their abhorrence of the blasphemies, atheism, and other enormous crimes, which, alas, have been perpetrated in a neigh­bouring nation; and with a latent self-flattery, they rise in their own good opinion, by comparing their conduct with that of such daring enemies to God and his Christ. Others exclaim against those that deny our Lord’s di­vinity, or his atonement; and they seem to feel much inward satisfaction in opposing these dangerous heresies; while some congratulate themselves, that they never scoff at religion, but always speak respectfully of its sacred truths and duties. Thus in various ways men keep up a persuasion that they are Christians: yet if we insist upon unreserved submission to Christ, according to that view of it which hath been stated, they would perhaps acknowledge, they had not gone *so far* in religion. If they have not been avowed oppo­nents, they have in a great measure endeavoured to maintain a neutrality; but such persons should recollect that Christ hath said, “He that is not with me is against me;” so that all will be considered as enemies, who are not his cordial friends and loyal subjects.—Indeed this is a general cause of men’s destruction: they compare themselves with some other characters, fancy themselves better than they, quiet their consciences, and go on in the ways of sin and ungodliness.

But what consolation will it be in the day of wrath, should your condem­nation be one degree less heavy than that of your neighbours? Should you approach as near to Christianity, as a man can possibly do, who is not a true disciple of Christ, what would it avail you? Suppose you hesitate, from love to some lawful earthly comfort, which you prefer to Christ, and refuse to part with for his sake: will not that very circumstance render your feel­ings most exquisitely poignant, when the doom shall be pronounced against you? This cannot be too closely brought home to conscience: for it was a prevailing delusion even at the time when our Lord was on earth. Know, therefore, whether thou art a Judas, betraying Christ for sordid lucre, under the mask of a disciple or a minister; a Pilate, “*washing thine hands,*” by giv­ing up his cause from fear of man, and then pretending to excuse it;—a Herod, that openly insultest him;—a Gallio, that carest for none of these things;—or a Felix, who tremblest and stiflest thy convictions. Whether thou join the multitude that cry, “Crucify him, crucify him; not this man but Barabbas;” or with Agrippa, art “almost persuaded to be a Christian;” or “departest sorrowful, because thou hast great possessions which of these characters soever belong to thee, know assuredly that thou wilt perish, from the right way, unless thou repent, and become a believing and obedient subject of the Lord Jesus. And what will it avail thee, that numbers will be associated in the same condemnation, or even perish in a still more tre­mendous manner?

But is not this harsh and uncharitable? Hear the words of Christ him­self.—”Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple.” “Except he forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Does charity consist in contradicting “the true and faith­ful Witness,” or “in speaking peace, when there is no peace?” The case is the same as it was of old.—Some daringly blaspheme, and openly reject the Son of God: others use respectful language; but their actions show, that they value the pleasures of sin, the friendship of the world, the pride of life, filthy lucre, or the praise of men, more than him and his salvation. But all such persons virtually declare, that *they* did right, who, actuated by various worldly motives, concurred in nailing him to the cross. None who lived at that time, and might have heard his doctrine, or witnessed his mi­racles, were wholly free from the guilt of his death, except the remnant of his true disciples: and none at present are wholly free from the charge of crucifying the Son of God afresh, who persist in neglecting his great salva­tion.

“Blessed then are all they that put their trust in him.” They are blessed in their present security and privileges; and they shall be blessed in their eternal inheritance. To you, my brethren, who thus cordially welcome the Saviour, and submit to the king of Zion, with unreserved obedience and fidelity, though with many lamented imperfections; to you belong peace with God, peace of conscience, the adoption of children, and the consolations of the Holy Spirit. It is your privilege to “rejoice in hope, to be patient in tribulations;” to find support in trials, safety in all dangers, victory over every enemy, and a rich advantage from all losses and sufferings. Whether you be rich and prosperous, or poor and afflicted; whatever your station or circumstances may be, you are blessed; for God himself hath pronounced you so: you shall be blessed through life, and in death; and when the Re­deemer shall appear to judge the world. Lift up then your heads, for your redemption draweth near; and when others shall cry to the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb; you shall exclaim with triumphant exultation; “This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord,—we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”