

## II.

### SERMON PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF KILSYTH, ON TUESDAY, 23D JULY, 1839.<sup>1</sup>

“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”—Ps. cx. 3.

The will, my friends, is the ruling faculty in the soul of man, and a man’s character is very much determined by the prevailing bent of this power within him. It is the office, you know, of the memory to recollect what is past; it is the office of the fancy to plan and devise what is new; it is the office of the understanding to deliberate, of the conscience to pronounce the law of right and wrong, of the desires and affections to draw and impel, and above all these the will sits, as it were, supreme, pronouncing the final decision, and thus determining what is to be done. If you get a man’s will, you have him on your side, and may reckon on his support; whereas, though you may convince his understanding and delight his fancy, and move his affections, yet if his will remains opposed to you, he takes part against you. And thus, my friends, the state of the will is always made a matter of the first importance in inquiring into the position in which the soul of a man stands with regard to God. It is the crowning part of man’s depravity that his will is opposed to the will of God; that he does that which God forbids, and leaves undone that which God commands. Jehovah says, “Thou shalt;” man impiously answers in his practice, if not in words, “I will not.” Jehovah says, “Thou shalt not;” man again replies, “I will,” thus seeking to be independent of Jehovah—to be as God, giving law to himself, and following his own will, instead of receiving the holy law of his Creator, and making it the guide of all his resolutions. This is the state of the fallen soul by nature; and therefore, my friends, when God brings back in his infinite love the souls of his elect people to his service, he makes them willing. He has exalted, as you find from this psalm, the Lord Jesus as mediator to the right hand of universal power; and while he promises to Messiah that his enemies shall be made his footstool, he promises that those elect ones whom the Father gave him to redeem, and whom he purchased to himself with his own blood, shall be willing, inasmuch as when the will is once renewed, and brought into the service of Jesus, the way is prepared for every other faculty being restored to holiness, and every thought being brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

In this promise two things, you perceive, require explanation: I. The nature of this willingness which Jehovah promises Christ’s people shall have; and, II. The nature of that day of Jesus’ power in which this is to be accomplished. In endeavouring to explain the former of these topics, I remark—

1st. Christ’s people are willing to be saved by his imputed righteousness. This willingness appears to unconverted sinners as though it were not difficult to be at-

---

<sup>1</sup> These notes only exhibit the substance of a discourse which was greatly expanded and lightened up in the delivery. They may, however, serve to illustrate the kind of instruction, so far as the substance is concerned, on which the revival movement of that day might be said to rest.

tained; and many who are entirely unrenewed have the confidence that they possess it. They know that they are sinners, and being afraid, especially in times of distress and in the near prospect of death, of the wrath of a holy God, they most gladly cling to anything which affords them the prospect of safety, and thus, out of a mere desire for deliverance from hell, they would be very glad that the righteousness of Christ were accounted theirs, and that they should thus obtain forgiveness. This is in substance the kind of willingness for Christ's righteousness that ungodly sinners possess, and not as if it were a saving appropriation of Jesus. But, my friends, though the faith of most persons who profess to follow Christ is little better than this universal desire for deliverance from pain produces, this is far different indeed from that willingness for Christ's imputed righteousness which his true people have. For observe, among other things, that in the willingness of the unconverted soul for Christ's righteousness there is no true and humbling conviction of personal unrighteousness. The sinner may see that God will accept nothing that he has done, and that he will charge him with the omission of thousands of duties, but then he does not feel nor acknowledge from the heart the propriety of God's doing so; he does not humbly pass sentence against himself according to the judgment of God, but proudly thinks, at least in his own breast, that there is no such heinousness in his sin as that it would be unworthy of God and a stain upon his holiness if he should be pardoned. And then again, though he may desire the benefit of Jesus' obedience, he has no true esteem for that obedience itself, he sees no glory in it, nor any such sufficiency in it that at the command of God he will venture his soul's eternity upon it and it alone; and so you always find that though such sinners profess that Christ is all their hope, they are unwilling to be convinced of their being great and flagrant sinners, and plainly discover that their chief trust is founded, not upon what Christ has done, but upon what they are themselves. On the contrary, when there is a true willingness to be saved by the imputed righteous of Christ, the soul is truly convinced of sin, and feels assured that it cannot be saved by any efforts of its own, and that it were glorifying to God's holiness and justice to cast it forever from his sight into the place of punishment; and then again, the soul while it sees itself all vile, has obtained some discoveries of the glorious perfection of the work of Jesus, its superlative excellence in the sight of God, and rejoices in the thought of being allowed to rest on this for salvation, not only because it is sufficient to procure its deliverance from wrath, but because it also gloriously satisfies the demands of God's justice, and vindicates the honour of his holiness. But—

2d. Christ's people are willing to be brought into subjection to his kingly power. This is a still more clear and decisive mark of a true convert than the one which we have just been noticing. Those who desire Christ's righteousness merely from carnal motives, without any humbling knowledge of themselves, or any just esteem for its excellence, will always be found to shun the yoke of Christ. The end of their religion is peace; and if peace could be got without true conversion to the love of God, they would never seek after an attainment which is much too holy for their taste. In every heart, however, which Christ makes willing, there is a supreme desire to be brought under dominion to Christ's love, a holy hatred of all sin, and a real longing that Christ would come and set free the heart from every lust, and passion, and idol which op-

pose the law of God, and dispute the supreme place with him in its affections. It is true, as all real converts know, and as the Lord has so fully taught us by St. Paul, that the power of sin in the soul, though broken, is not destroyed, that the flesh warreth against the Spirit, and that not infrequently the will, which is but partly renewed, seems to consent to sin. But even in such cases the man sins with a divided will; there is a secret wrestling against that desire which is for the time superior, and after a time the holy, spiritual will shows its supremacy, and the soul is humbled in deeper self-loathing and contrition in proportion to the degree in which it has backslidden from God. The soul of the true believer, though it is not free from sin, would be free entirely and for ever if a resolution of the will could give sin its death-blow. However, it is not so. Though the will be renewed, sin still dwells in the members. The believer would do good, and yet evil is present with him; he delights in the law of God after the inward man, and being unwillingly detained in bondage, he cries out with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and willingly adds, rejoicing in Christ's kingly power to deliver him from sin, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." But—

3d. Christ's true people are willing to bear the cross in following him. It is one of the marks, you know, which Christ gives of the stony-ground hearers, that in times of persecution they fall away; but it is not so with Christ's true people. In giving themselves up to him they make no reserve, and are well satisfied to have him instead of all else that the world counts dear, and even at the expense of life itself. This last great sacrifice we are not at present called to make, but there are many others that still remain for God's people to try the reality of their attachment to Jesus, and the value which they set upon him. They are often called to confess his name before his enemies, and those who are his professed but false-hearted friends; and many other trials they must endure, especially in the first days of their new life, when old companions observe the change of their character, and try every art, by means of smiles and frowns, and bribes and reproaches, to draw them back into their former ways; but in all such cases the true convert is willing to bear the cross. He finds it hard and painful, but easy in comparison to parting with Jesus. He naturally fears and shrinks from suffering, but by grace he still more fears and shrinks from sin; and if there is no alternative but either to deny his Master or die for his name, he is enabled to be faithful still, yea, to rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his holy and blessed name.

We proceed now, however, in the second place, to remark regarding the day of Jesus' power here spoken of—

1st. This day is the time of his exaltation to the mediatorial throne. It is on this throne, you perceive, that in this psalm he is spoken of as sitting as a priest and as a king; it is on this throne, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, that he wields the sceptre of universal dominion, and that he rules in the midst of his enemies on earth; and it is from this that he sends forth that power which makes his people willing to obey him. Jesus, you know, exercised his kingly power even before he came in the flesh and offered up that sacrifice on account of which the Father exalted him, and thus the saints under the Old Testament were brought in subjection to his law. But it

is most properly after Christ ascended up on high that he received all power in heaven and on earth, and therefore the latter days, or the times which reach from his ascension to his second coming, are more properly called the day of his power, and it is in these, accordingly, that the great multitude of his redeemed are gathered under his sceptre. In these times, my friends, blessed be God, we are privileged to live, and are therefore called to look for the fulfilment of the glorious promises that relate to it and to it alone. But—

2d. It is the day of Christ's power when the gospel is fully and freely preached. The gospel of Christ is called the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. And it receives this grand appellation because it reveals Christ crucified, who, though he be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, is yet to them that believe, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. And thus you see, my friends, that whenever the Lord intends to grant a day of his saving power to sinners, he raises up and sends forth ministers who determine with St. Paul to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. When God is frowning upon a people he does not always remove the public ordinances from among them, but withdrawing the teaching of his Spirit from those who come forward to preach his word, the pulpits become filled with men who know little or nothing of the power of God in their own hearts, and thus, though the preacher may study with diligence, and discuss with all the power of argument, and learning, and eloquence, that preaching of the cross which is to them that perish foolishness, is wanting, the glories of Jesus' person and of Jesus' work, with all the rest of his unsearchable riches, are forgotten, or but slightly and seldom touched; and thus, though the minister may preach and the people hear from day to day, the power of God is awanting, and souls perish unconvinced and unconverted. When, however, the Lord in his mercy returns to a nation or a city to gather out of them a people for his name, he raises up ambassadors who know from personal experience the evil and the guilt of sin, and have been led by the Spirit to rejoice in Jesus as all their salvation and as all their desire, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. And then, my friends, the matchless glories of Immanuel are displayed, his preciousness is opened up, his love to sinners, and his willingness to receive with the open arms of his infinite love all that feel their ruined condition and are anxious for deliverance, are proclaimed and magnified; and thus a day of grace from on high is introduced, sinners are awakened, and are drawn to receive the Lord Jesus, being made "willing in the day of his power." But—

3d. This leads me to notice, in the last place, that the day of Christ's power is the time of the outpouring of his Spirit. The doctrine of Christ crucified is called the power of God, because it is the instrument which God employs in pulling down the strongholds of sin and Satan. But yet, my friends, this doctrine is, after all, but an instrument which cannot be effectual unless when it is wielded by the almighty Spirit of God, by whose divine agency it is alone that sinners are loosed from the bondage of Satan, and brought into the glorious liberty of God's children. Often is this great truth demonstrated in the experience of every Christian, and especially of every Christian minister. The truth of the gospel is often preached with clearness, fulness, earnest-

ness, and affection, sinners are taught their ruined and perishing condition under the broken covenant of works, and Christ is freely held out to them and urgently pressed upon them, and yet they remain despisers and rejecters of the Lord from heaven, and the minister of Christ is often found in sadness to exclaim, Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? The people hear, and are perhaps attentive, and begin to reform many of those sinful practices in which they formerly indulged, but yet their hearts remain unconvinced of sin, and unenlightened in the glorious knowledge of Christ, and unconverted to God, there is still little seeking of Christ in secret prayer, little alarm experienced on account of sin, and few serious efforts to receive the Lord Jesus as he is freely offered. But, oh, how changed is the scene when the Spirit is outpoured! Then the hearts of God's people become full to overflowing with love to Jesus, and are drawn forth in vehement desires, after his glorious appearing, to build up Zion. They are much in secret, and much in united prayer, and are cheered by the gladdening hope that the Lord is soon to listen to the groaning of the prisoner, and save those that are appointed unto death. The ministers of God, also, are in general particularly enlivened and refreshed in their own souls. In private they are deeply humbled in soul before the Lord, and have an uncommon measure of the Spirit of supplication for sinners given them, with ardent love to Christ, melting compassion for perishing souls, and vehement desires for their salvation; and then, when they come to preach Jesus, they are evidently anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, they speak with holy unction, earnestness, and affection, and sometimes hardly know how to leave off beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God. And then observe the frame of the hearers at such a time. Formerly no terror could awaken them from their sleep of death, they still said, Peace and safety, though sudden destruction was coming upon them; but now a few words are enough to pierce their inmost heart, and make them cry out often aloud and against their will, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Formerly Jesus was held forth and was despised, but now every word that tells of his love is precious, his name is as ointment poured forth, and sinners are filled with an agony of desire for a saving union unto him. Men, and women, and children retire from the house of God, not to profane the evening of God's day in idle talk or idle strolling. They have much business to do with God. Their doors are shut, their Bibles are in their hands, or they are crying to God upon their knees as they are conversing with the godly, and obtaining the benefit of their counsel to guide them on the way to Jesus. These, my friends, are, you know, some of the marks of a day of the power of Jesus. When the Spirit is poured out from on high, and sinners' hearts are moved, the iron sinews of their necks are relaxed, and their brows of brass are crowned with shame; they flock to take shelter under his wings, like doves to their windows; they rejoice in his love as men that divide the spoil. Satan is discomfited, his captives are set free, and God is glorified. Such times of refreshing as these have been often experienced, and are destined to be still more gloriously displayed in coming times. Pentecost—Reformation—in Scotland, England, Ireland, particularly in Scotland—Shotts—Ayr—Irvine—Cambuslang—Kilsyth—Moulin—Glenlyon—Arran, and Skye.

## HEADS OF APPLICATION.

1. We have cause to lament—few willing—little appearance of a day of power;—but cause also for joy and thankfulness—we live under the Pentecost times—we have had the gospel fully preached—and the Spirit has been sending you a few drops to excite a desire for more of his power.

2. Sinners! will not ye come to Jesus?—accept of his righteousness—submit to his blessed power—why not?—what have you worth comparing with his love? &c.—come, come, come!

3. Christians! are you desiring a day of power?—some of you stand in God's way—ye do not want a day of power—it would make you live more holily—expose you to more reproach, &c.—oh, shame! shame!—sinners perishing—Jesus despised, and yet you remain unconcerned. Pray, pray, pray—secretly, unitedly, fervently, with faith and importunity—“The Lord's hand is *not* shortened that,” &c. —examples of the power of prayer—Shotts, Cambuslang, Kilsyth—time short—soon prayers at an end—removed from the footstool—power will come—but not by us—we shall be ashamed to meet our Lord! to look sinners in the face at judgment! &c.