

TREASURY of TRUTH

No. 190

———— The ————
Old, Old Story
from the
Old Testament
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BY

JOHN WATT

The Old, Old Story from the Old Testament

A SERIES OF ADDRESSES

BY
JOHN WATT

Author of
"Handfuls of Parched Corn."



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FOREWORD

The privilege of reading the proof sheets of the following addresses has been given to me, with a request from the author that I pen a few lines by way of introduction. After going through the whole book I feel that little more needs to be said than that it justifies its title from beginning to end, "The Old, Old Story from the Old Testament." Biography, history, incident and even legal enactment found in the law and the prophets have been drawn upon, to illustrate the gospel of God and His ways with men. The types have not been strained but used in a sane and conservative way to illustrate the truth presented, and there is a skilful weaving together of Old and New Testament portions that makes one think of the "taches of gold" and "loops of blue" that bound together the covering curtain of the Tabernacle of Israel.

Furthermore, one cannot but be thankful for the uncompromising testimony to the outstanding truths connected with the gospel. This is most refreshing in a day when all around there is a questioning if not utter repudiation of the fundamentals of the "faith once for all delivered to the saints." In this volume man's ruin and sin are fearlessly set forth, and the judgment for Christ-rejecters insisted on without equivocation or abatement. The need of the new birth for fallen man is pressed in unmistakable terms, and the value of the precious blood of Christ as the only way of salvation from guilt before God is presented clearly, definitely and appealingly.

It is to be hoped that the book will have a wide circulation, for it is calculated in every way to help and edify.

C. W. Ross.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The following gospel addresses have been delivered on different occasions. Many have pressed me to publish them so that they might have them in book form. They are presented in a spirit of humility, and with no claim to literary merit.

The addresses are drawn from the Old Testament, since it abounds with valuable illustrations of the gospel of God's grace. The Old Testament has been neglected by many preachers. They must have it, however, as a foundation for their New Testament teaching. The Lord made reference to the scribe well-instructed in things pertaining to the kingdom, comparing him with a householder who could bring out of his treasure things new and old—things from the New Testament and things from the Old. The Lord Himself drew many of His illustrations from the Old Testament. Paul, Peter and Jude were well-instructed scribes, emphasizing their teaching by Old Testament illustrations.

These addresses have been condensed and much of the oral personal appeal at the end omitted. It is always advisable to make a personal appeal at the end of an address. The fisherman casts his net, and then draws it in, in the hope he may catch fish. The preacher speaks, and then makes his appeal, in the hope that souls may be saved.

It is hoped that the contents of this volume will stir up an interest in some of the neglected portions of the Old Testament. Intended in the first place to reach the unsaved, may these messages be blessed by God in the salvation of many souls.

Should readers be led to a saving knowledge of Christ, I am confident that there will be rejoicing on the part of both the author and those who exercise a similar interest in the salvation of sinners.

JOHN WATT.

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The Old, Old Story from the Old Testament

MAN'S RUIN AND GOD'S REMEDY

(Genesis 3: 1-24)

THERE are three chapters in the Word of God upon which the preacher should never tire of speaking; these are the third chapter of Genesis, the third chapter of Romans, and the third chapter of John's Gospel. These great basic chapters bring before us the ruin of man and how that ruin can be met. In the book of Genesis we get the beginning of all things; and it is well to start at the foundation and see exactly where we are. Here in the third chapter you have the introduction of sin into the world, for, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Never was the need of emphasizing the fall of man greater than today, because on every hand this fundamental truth is being denied. Men tell us that if there was a fall at all, it was a fall upward; but Genesis 3 shows it was a fall downward. Man did not ascend then, and man is not ascending the ladder

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today. No; it was a fall downward, and downward as far as possible. Man did not rise from the beast, as some tell us; far from that, the first chapter of Romans gives the exact truth—that man has fallen below the level of the brute beasts. In the beginning he was placed as head of God's fair creation, everything was under his hand, everything answered to him; but, as a result of the fall, man is not only completely ruined but capable of descending lower than the beasts.

If the general of an army makes one mistake, the whole army is involved in its disastrous consequences. If a captain of a ship makes a wrong decision, the whole crew has to share in the wreck. If the Governor of a State, or the ruler of a country, takes a false step, the whole State or country is involved. Adam, the head of creation and our great federal head, falls, and, as a consequence, we all fall; the chief corner-stone proves false, and in his fall brings down the whole structure with him. You remember the case of Saul, the first king of Israel: God made him the head of that great nation and placed everything in his hands, but he disobeyed the plain Word of God; he fell, and, as a result, disaster came upon that whole nation.

Here in Genesis 3, we have exactly the same principle. When Adam, the chief corner-stone, fell, he brought down the whole creation with him; even the animal kingdom shared in the fall. To this day the whole creation groaneth, and it

will travail in pain until He comes whose right it is to reign, for only He can lift it from the universal ruin. He alone can, and He will, bring it into the glorious liberty of the children of God, for as Adam brought all down with him, so Christ, in a coming day, will bring all connected with Him into eternal blessing.

In Genesis 2 you have God creating man. He made him out of the dust, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Man is God's masterpiece. He came forth from His hand perfect. Far from coming from the monkey, as some say, he came from the hand of God, formed in His image and likeness, and thus is responsible to God. That is the reason why God calls men to repentance today, and that too is the reason they will be judged by God in a coming day. Man is entirely distinct from the beasts because he has the Divine in-breathing and is answerable to God.

Let me point out to you some ways in which man is far different from and higher than the beasts:

First of all, God made man *in His own image and in His own likeness*. The Triune God in consultation said: "Let US make man in Our image and after Our likeness." There the Godhead acts, and the work is done.

Next, as man, Adam was placed at the head of all God's creation to represent God, to satisfy the heart of God and to be responsible to God. As

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we said before, he was the chief corner-stone. God asks Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . Who laid the chief corner-stone?" As Christ is the chief corner-stone of the new creation, Adam was the chief corner-stone of the old. He was given universal dominion and was made the head of the race.

Furthermore, man is far different from the beast because he has *the Divine in-breathing*. God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul. Because he carries eternity in his bosom, man must BE as long as GOD IS. When a beast dies that is the end of it, for God never breathed into the animals the breath of life, but when man dies it is not the end of him. By receiving the Divine in-breathing man is placed upon a different scale entirely, and is thus much higher than the animals.

Again, man is seen to be higher than the brute beast in that God placed him *over the animals*. All were brought to Adam in order that he might name them; and this he did, giving them descriptive names that were exactly suited to them. God put Adam over the lower creation, the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the air. The distinction is clearly seen in 1 Cor. 15: 39: "All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, and another of fishes, and another of birds."

Moreover, the difference between man and the animals is seen in the *institution of marriage*. God

said concerning Adam, "An help meet I will make for him." God never said that of the animals. There was no suitable companion for Adam in the animal creation. But God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and, while he slept, God took a rib from the side of Adam, and of that rib He builded a woman. When Adam awoke God presented the woman to him to be his companion and to share his position with him. Thus, in God giving the woman to the man, marriage received the Divine sanction. Marriage is according to God, countenanced by God. There is no such thing in the animal creation.

Then, man differs from the animals in this respect that "God made man upright." He is the only creature that can look up into Heaven. Asaph says that while he remained outside the sanctuary he was "as a beast;" he had no foresight; he could not see above his own level. That's what marks the beast, it cannot see above its own level; but God made man upright, able to look up into Heaven, to look up to the face of God. Man looks up, the animals look down.

Besides all these, man is different from the animals because of the *gifts with which God has endowed him. He has the power of speech.* None of the animals has that. I know that some birds have been taught to "say" a few words, but that is altogether apart from speech. A dog can bark, a cat can mew, an ox can low, and a bird can trill, but nowhere can you find an animal in crea-

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tion gifted with speech. Why did God give man speech? It was in order that he might speak to Him and commune with Him, in order that he might set Him forth and represent God in creation. Not one of the brute creation is so endowed. You can hear the owl screech; but look at man! How different he is from the animal! He can hold an audience spellbound for an hour or more by his oratory. Who gave him that gift? God gave him the power of speech, in order that he might use it to the glory of God.

Again, man has the *power of song*. We speak of the birds singing, but they are held down to only a few notes of the same kind. When we consider man, however, we find he has the power of song, and it was God who gave him this wonderful gift. I believe it was given in order that man might sing praises to His Name, to sing hymns and spiritual songs unto God. The first time we read about singing in the Word of God is after the children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea. They groaned down in Egypt, and it was not until they passed through the Red Sea and were on dry ground that they were able to sing to the Lord who had triumphed gloriously and who had cast the horse and its rider into the sea. In a coming day we are going to sing the wonderful song of redemption, to sing unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins. God has given us the power of song in order that we might sing unto Him. Think of the great singers this world has

known—the men and women who have thrilled audiences with their songs. Think of men able to compose music and charm their listeners with its harmony. Who gave them that gift? God gave it to them, and in this respect He has placed them far above the animals. Yet men tell us we came from monkeys. What utter nonsense such a theory becomes when we look into God's blessed Word and see things as they really are!

Man has also the *gift of writing*. None of the animals can write. God has endowed man with this wonderful gift so that we can communicate one with another. In fact, that is the way God has of communicating with His people. The first time we have writing mentioned is when God told Moses "To write these things in a book in order that they might have them for a memorial." That is the way God has of conveying His thoughts to us. Holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. He has given us the Bible, this wonderful Book, in order that we might understand His mind, in order that we might receive His Divine communications. Men have written books in untold numbers concerning this precious volume, the Word of God. The power of writing places them far above the animal creation, for it is a gift bestowed alone upon man by God.

Then God has given man another gift—the *gift of reading*. The first time reading is mentioned is when the children of Israel read the Law. The Law was read in order that men might know the

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mind of the Lord. And the gift of reading was given to us in order that we might read God's Holy Word. We need to consult it day by day. We need to make it the man of our counsel. What is the use of having the Book at all if we do not read it? When God gave us the Book, He meant us to esteem it as our treasure, to make it our own. Do you read it day by day? Do you appreciate this wonderful gift God has given? Do you meditate therein day and night? Do you give your spare time to the reading of the Scriptures? "Give attendance to reading." None of the animals read, but God has endowed man with the wonderful gift of reading.

Another way in which man is seen to be above the animals is in the power of *calculation*. Think of the great Ford Motor Works in Detroit. There are men there who can tell the expense of those works to a cent. They can tell how much is made in a year. By calculation they can arrange things in order that the entire plant shall operate in perfect harmony. Think of our great banking system—how perfectly it works. Men can tell from the plans how much steel, down to a pound, is going to be used in a great engineering project. Think of the mathematicians. Animals know nothing about these things. You could not make an animal take in the things of a man. It is an utter impossibility for them to know the things of a man. "No man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him." And it

is God who has bestowed upon man the wonderful gift of calculation.

God has endowed man with the *gift of invention*. This was never given to animals. Think of all the wonderful things we use in this country—intricate transportation systems working in unison and order, the airplanes, the telephones, the wireless, the radio—look at all these and consider the amazing things man has invented and discovered. This ability to bring these wonders to pass has been given to him by God, and proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that man is altogether superior to the beasts.

God has given man *a forehead*. You never saw a beast with one. Man is the only creature who has a forehead, and in a coming day God is going to place His Name on the foreheads of those who are His own.

None of the animals has the *knowledge of the approach of death*. Man is the only creature who knows when death is drawing near and who is afraid of it. With all his intelligence, all his inventions, he cannot keep death from his door; and yet although, without consulting a doctor, he knows that death is coming, he does not want to think of it. You have this knowledge, and the wisest thing for you is to be prepared for death before it does come. He may stalk into your room this very night and put his hand upon you, and if you do not have the question of your soul's salvation settled, you will be lost for all eternity. For

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something is going to happen to you that will not happen to the beast. You will be raised from the dead and stand before God. There is no future punishment for the beast, but there is for man, because man has Divine gifts and knowledge and is responsible to God.

God sent His blessed Son to accomplish salvation in order to save you from coming judgment and from the penalty of sin, but if you despise the way of salvation which He has provided in His blessed Son, then He will deal with you and will judge you for your sin. God's Word says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." You will be lost, eternally lost, if you reject God's blessed Son and despise His way of salvation. God calls you to repent because He looks upon you as a responsible agent, one who has the power to refuse or believe the Gospel of God's grace.

Another great point of difference between man and the brute creation is that there is a *resurrection* for man, but no resurrection for animals. When an animal dies that is the end of it. It does not have the Divine in-breathing. But when man dies he lives again. Job says: "Man dieth, he wasteth away, yea, he giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" "He wasteth away"—that is the body. "He giveth up the ghost"—that is the spirit. "Where is he?"—that is the soul. If you die unsaved, your body goes to the grave, your soul goes to hades. The Lord Jesus Christ said there will be a resurrection of the just and unjust.

"The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." All those who have died in their sins will be raised in their sins to stand before the great white throne. Oh, you may wish you had been a beast in that day, for the beast dies, and that is the end of it, but not so man. You will have to live as long as God lives, because you have within you an ever-existing soul. Yes, there is a day of resurrection for men who have died in their sins; they will be raised in their sins to stand before a holy God!

Now let us look for a few moments at man in innocency, for in order that we may understand the fall we must first see man in innocency. Endowed with all good gifts that God could possibly give him, he was placed in Eden's garden to dress it and keep it. You see, at that time there was no death in Eden. Why not? Because there was no sin there. But immediately after sin enters, death comes in. No sin and no death were in Eden's garden prior to the fall. All was a scene of pleasure, joy, happiness, perfection, and beauty. Adam was at the head of creation, fresh from the hand of his Maker. What a wonderful scene—God coming down in the cool of the day to walk with man and hold communion with him, and man in sweet fellowship with God. But there was one creature,

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Satan by name, who had his eye upon the whole scene, and he was determined to spoil the work of God, because he was the great enemy of God. At one time Satan occupied a most wonderful and honorable position. As the anointed cherub, he was a prophet, priest and king, but lifted up with pride, he said, "I will be as God;" he aimed at the very throne of God. He was cast down for his sin, and when he fell angelic beings whom he had led in rebellion were involved in the ruin with him. He beholds man in that Garden of delights, and, filled with envy and malice, he determines to blight that scene by ruining man, and the plan which he adopts is to instil pride into him. Pride is called "the snare of the devil." He fell by pride himself and he works ruin in others by the same evil thing. This was the purpose of the temptation, "Ye shall be as God," and Satan instilled into our first parents that by which he himself fell.

Now it seems from what we have read in the Scriptures that when Satan has any special work to do he acts directly himself. Ordinarily, he acts through agents; very seldom does he appear in person, unless, as we have said, there is some important purpose to be accomplished. Thus he appears in person here because it is of prime importance to bring down the first man, Adam. He does not leave that to any of his agents. It was he personally who came to tempt David. And when it was a question of the Lord Jesus Christ

being tempted in the wilderness Satan came himself. He says, "I have brought down the first man Adam; I have brought down David; I have brought down many others; I will bring this One down as well." He came to the Lord Jesus Christ and tempted Him in the three ways wherein the first man was tempted—by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, but the Lord Jesus Christ warded off all three forms of temptation. He answered Satan, "It is written," "It is written," and Satan had to retire baffled and defeated. Later when Satan required a man to deny the Lord, he got Peter. "Satan hath desired to have thee," said the Lord. When Satan wanted a man to betray and sell the blessed Lord, he entered into Judas Iscariot; yes, to make his work sure he entered the traitor. I know many people today do not believe in a personal Devil. They do not believe there is such a being as Satan. They associate him in their mind with that caricature, a red demon with horns and hoofs. Let me tell you, Satan is a great dignitary—he is a mighty power. Even Michael the archangel would not bring a railing accusation against Satan; he is such a dignitary that Michael would only say, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan."

People today say there is no devil.

"They have voted the devil out,
And of course the devil has gone;
But the simple ones would like to know,
Who carries his business on?"

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Certain things in the world we cannot close our eyes to, things which have been introduced by Satan himself. He is the source of all that is *evil* in the world, and no matter where we look, we see evil staring us in the face; we find men sunk in ruin and in sin, gloating in sin, practising sin, sold under sin. Sin is here. Look around; look at the asylums; look at the jails; look at the hospitals; look at the cemeteries; wherever we look we see sin and its havoc on every hand, the world full of violence and wickedness. And all that is here because man has turned away from God and has given his ear to Satan.

There is something else in this world, and that is *death*. Death is attached to everything; everything dies. Flowers in the garden die, grass dies, animals die, men die. Death is upon everything here, because death is the consequence of sin. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and, "The wages of sin is death."

And there are other evil things in this world—malice, guile, envies, hypocrisies, evil speakings—and they are here because they all came in with sin. Lying is here. The world is full of lying and wickedness. And murder is here. Where did these terrible evils come from? Satan was a murderer and a liar from the beginning. Sin, death, malice, lying, murder, all these things are here as the result of Satan's victory over our first parents.

But, thank God, that is not all. There is a way

out. The Lord Jesus Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil. That is what He came into the world for. All that Satan has introduced, the Lord Jesus came to destroy. He has borne our sins and annulled the power of death. All your social schemes and laws to better things will never remove sin, nor can they remove death. The Lord Jesus Christ was God's Lamb, He came to put away sin, He came to destroy him who had the power of death, and this He did by dying for us—blessed be His Name! Through death He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the Devil. The Lord Jesus was the One who died to atone for sin. On Calvary's cross He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. There He died in the room and stead of the sinner. The judgment of God was poured out upon Him. Enough judgment to damn a universe fell upon Christ in those hours of darkness on Calvary, but by His death He annulled death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the Gospel.

Reader, if you have never before received forgiveness you may have it now, because these things are presented to you in the Gospel. Through your sin you are the lawful captive of Satan, but the Lord Jesus Christ has died for sin. He came to take the prey from the mighty and deliver the lawful captive. He was the One stronger than Satan, the strong one, and He went into death that He might destroy him who had the

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power of death. He has taken from him all his armor, and delivered his captives. By death he annulled him that had the power of death and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. That is what He did at Calvary. Moreover, "He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly." And ultimately He will cast him into the lake of fire to be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Satan is today your enemy. Just as he aimed at bringing Adam down, so he aims at the destruction of *your* soul. As he ruined Adam in the garden, he is set upon *your* ruin. You have heard how you are responsible to God, that you are a sinner, that you are under the sentence of death. What is the best thing to do under the circumstances? Confess your condition before God, take the lost sinner's place, and take the lost sinner's Saviour. You may answer, "You don't know what kind of a person I am. I have always done the best I could. I have always lived a decent life." That may all be true, but that will never remove sin, it will *NEVER, NEVER* remove you from the power of death. What you need is Christ and His precious blood to cleanse you from sin and save you from coming wrath.

Then, my friend, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; accept Him as your Saviour, your own personal Saviour and Lord, and you will be saved for time and eternity.

THE FALL OF MAN

(Genesis 3)

IN a former address we considered man as superior to the beast, and Satan as the great enemy of God and man. He came into Eden's garden to bring down Adam and ruin the work of God.

The first thing Satan insinuates is that God is not doing His best for man, that He is keeping back the best from him, in other words, God is not as good to man as He might be. Satan instils into man the thought that God is hard, and that he could do better for man than God. He is busy today instilling the same thoughts into men, and they think God is not doing His best for them. How different is the reality! The truth is that God has always been *for* man: instead of keeping back His best, He has given His best, for He gave His only begotten Son. He could not give more than the best.

Satan speaks to the woman away from the man; he makes his attack through the weaker vessel. She ought to have referred him to Adam, her head, and not engaged in conversation with him. Satan is after her ear. If he can gain the ear and the eye, he has captured the two great avenues to the heart.

God had said they were not to eat of the tree,

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lest they die. Satan, casting a doubt on God's Word, said to them, "Ye shall not surely die." When God says, "Ye shall," Satan says, "Ye shall not." God's Word says, "The wages of sin is death," Satan says, "God is too loving to send man to hell or to punish sin," and many people today believe this. They prefer to believe Satan to accepting the Word of God.

Satan speaks of their eyes being opened if they eat of the tree; but instead of their eyes being opened they were plunged into darkness. Man is blinded by Satan, the god of this world; he is in complete darkness; the blinds are down and the light of the glorious Gospel is kept out. God, however, wants to enlighten him. The first thing that happens when a man is saved, is that his eyes are opened. The Lord was sent to open the eyes of the blind.

Satan also said, "Ye shall be as gods." It would seem that Satan was cast down for this very same thing, and he seeks to instill into men the pride that brought about his own fall. He grasped at God's throne and was cast down. When men built the tower of Babel, they wanted to make themselves a name and reach to Heaven. Men would like to dethrone God. In the coming day the antichrist will sit in the temple of God, saying that he is God. When the Lord Jesus was here, they put Him to death because He claimed to be the Son of God; He was what they desired to be, He was God.

Satan also promised men wisdom, but through their disobedience they became the children of folly. They became foolish instead of wise. God speaks of men who are unsaved as "fools;" "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." There are two classes in this world—the children of wisdom and the children of folly.

Adam and Eve listened to the voice of the serpent and partook of the forbidden fruit; their eyes became opened to their own shame. They were innocent—now they are sinners. They were in communion with the Creator—now they are separated from Him by their sin. There are three ways of death spoken of in the Scriptures: First, the separation through sin of the creature from the Creator; secondly, the breaking up of the body, which we call "physical" death; thirdly, the eternal separation of the sinner from God, when the sinner is forever confined to the lake of fire.

Our first parents seek by their own efforts to cover their nakedness. They take fig leaves and sew them together, but they cannot cover themselves from the eye of God. Are you trying by your own efforts to cover your sin and make yourself fit for the eye of God? They may have congratulated themselves on their work, and thought the work of their own hands was comely. In these aprons there was no stitch of God—it was purely their own handiwork. These could not hide them from the eye of a holy God. The works of your own hands will never cover you, your

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covering is too narrow, and you will find your bed too short.

They then try the trees. God had given them the trees for food, and they use the very mercies God had given them to hide themselves from Him. Men and women today use the mercies of God to them as an excuse for staying away from God. When God calls, the covering and trees cannot hide them from His eye, and they stand exposed. Do you remember the wife of Jeroboam disguising herself, and thus appearing before an old, blind prophet? When he heard the sound of her feet, he said, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam. Why feignest thou thyself to be another?" She stood exposed. God sees, for all things are naked and open before Him; He can see through every disguise. You will remember the parable of the marriage of the king's son. Into the feast came a man without the wedding garment; he thought his own was good enough. The king came in to view the guests, his eye turns towards this intruder, he asks him the question: "Friend, how camest thou in here, not having on the wedding garment?" The man was speechless, he was taken and bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness. Paul's great desire was to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness. Do you desire to appear in your own? That will end in your exposure.

God's voice is now heard in the garden. God had come down in the cool of the day and walked

with man; once His voice had been sweet to him, now man is afraid. Sin had made man afraid of God. That is why men hide in infidelity and other strange notions; they are afraid of God. Sin makes cowards of men, and they flee from their Creator.

God is not running to punish man, but walking; not in the heat of passion, He comes in the cool of the day. Man has fled and is in hiding; he does not want to meet God, dreads His call and is afraid. Fear follows sin. God comes to seek man, it is not man seeking God. If God had not come out in grace to seek man, man would never have sought God. It is the shepherd who seeks the sheep, not the sheep seeking the shepherd. God is a Saviour, not a Judge. He is not against man, but for man; no matter what Adam's thoughts were about God, God is the Seeker here.

The world was moved at the loss of Colonel Lindbergh's child! Think of so much stir in the world at the loss of one child. Here Heaven is astir at the loss of one man, and Heaven is interested in *you*, my friend.

Do you recall the great search for David Livingstone? Livingstone had penetrated into the heart of the dark continent of Africa. For months no news had been heard from him. Thousands anxiously debated whether he was alive or dead. A young, capable journalist, employed on the staff of *The New York Herald*, was in Europe, when one day he received a cablegram from the

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proprietor of the paper, Mr. Bennett. It contained these words: "Find Livingstone. Bennett." The young journalist, almost unknown then, was none other than Sir Henry M. Stanley. The cablegram meant much. It meant the expenditure of tens of thousands of dollars, and the careful organization of a relief expedition. It meant to Stanley and to those who accompanied him, the jeopardizing of their lives. Their dangers were threefold: wild beasts, unfriendly natives, tropical diseases. These were enough to make the stoutest heart quake. All the world knows the result. Stanley found Livingstone. He discovered him in the heart of Africa.

You see the value the civilized world put on Livingstone. Here we have the value God places on man. When God came into the garden in the cool of the day to seek man, instead of finding him delighted to see Him, He finds him conscience-stricken and afraid, hiding behind trees. God loved him, valued him, and sought him.

He calls, "Adam, where art thou?" This is the call of a Saviour-God, the first of many questions asked in the Scriptures, and it is of the utmost importance. This is the last question Adam wanted God to ask him. Let me press this question upon you, my reader. It is one of the utmost importance, for on your answer hangs your eternal destiny. It is personal, "Where art *thou*?" Men are so anxious to know where their neighbor is, and will not try to discover where they are

themselves. John Ruskin, reputed to be the wisest man of the nineteenth century, said that every man ought to ask himself three questions: Where am I? Where am I going? What is the best thing to do under the circumstances? I awoke one morning, while steaming up the English Channel, to find to my surprise that the boat was standing still. I hurriedly dressed and went on deck, and found we were in a dense fog. The officers were taking soundings to find out where they were. They were lost, and wanted to know their exact position. Have you ever taken soundings to find out where you are? If not, it is high time you did. Are you on the broad way or the narrow way? In Christ, or out of Him?

A business man must keep books to let him know the status of his business. I was staying in the home of a friend in the north of Scotland when, sitting at the table one day, his daughter told her father that the man who kept his accounts had been taken very ill and it was unlikely he would recover. "Why," said my friend, "that is the only man in this world that knows where I am, for I don't know myself." If your body feels ill, you will go to see a doctor to find out exactly what is the trouble; you will not be as reckless with your body as you are with your soul. Why not place this question of your soul's condition first and find out where you are? The rich farmer of Luke 12 knew how his business stood, but neglected his soul. Here is a man whose

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business is going back; he is losing money every week, things are looking very black. I call to see him and urge him to take stock and see exactly where he stands. He is afraid to face the matter, for it will be humbling to him; he refuses to do so, and goes right on to ruin. Are you afraid to face this question because it may be humbling for you? If you will not, there is nothing before you but eternal ruin. Do not try to keep up appearances, but face the matter now and see where you are.

Adam answered, "I heard Thy voice. . . . I was afraid. . . . I was naked, and I hid myself." Have you heard the voice of God calling you? Have you been afraid, and have you hid? God calls to-day to bless you; in the coming day He will call you to judgment.

Adam tried to put the blame on the woman, and indirectly on God. He first tried to hide his sin, but when that was useless, he tried to blame the woman. When Aaron sinned in the matter of the golden calf, he tried to put the blame on the people. Men are unchanged today; they blame God for all the sin that is in the world. God is blamed for the poverty and distress that exist today. Men naturally are always bent on self-justification, always trying to clear themselves. Our prisons are full of men who have pleaded "Not guilty," and you, like others, have tried to justify yourself. Take your place before God now, and own your guilt.

God says, "What is this that thou hast done?" Let me repeat to you this question, "What have *you* done?" Let me drive this home upon your conscience. You have sinned against your Lord, your God.

We have here the first Gospel message, preached by God Himself: the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. There are two thoughts here: first, the Person of Christ—the Seed of the woman; secondly, the work of Christ—to bruise the head of the serpent. The Lord Jesus was the promised Saviour. He would be born of a woman; He who was the Eternal Son would step into manhood and into death to defeat Satan and deliver the sinner.

The serpent was cursed and the ground was cursed. Satan will yet meet with his final doom, for he will be cast into the lake of fire. The curse is on the earth today. It brings forth thorns and thistles. Do as they like, men cannot get the earth to yield its increase. There are many modern inventions to make it do so, but not until the curse is removed will it yield an hundred-fold.

I want to draw your attention to the way in which God clothed our first parents. He clothed them with coats of skin. They had tried to clothe themselves with fig leaves—these would not stand the day of testing. These fig leaves woven into aprons, were their own efforts at clothing. Here is the God-appointed clothing. Your own righte-

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ousness is set forth in the aprons, God's righteousness in the coats of skin. To provide this clothing an animal must be slain, blood had to be shed. There could be no clothing for you apart from the blood being shed. In the shed blood you see justice satisfied. When justice is satisfied, mercy acts. They were clothed, then driven out. God drove them towards the East; He did not drive them to despair—your sins may do that, but not God. The East is where the sun rises; when Christ was born the star appeared in the East.

At the East of the garden God placed the cherubim with a flaming sword; there could be no getting back there, the way was barred. The gate now is barred and guarded, Eden and innocence are gone forever. Let me tell you, my friend, that there is no sword today. That remarkable preacher, Christmas Evans, who labored in Wales, used to picture this world as a vast cemetery with rusted gates, closed and barred and guarded by the Angel Justice. One day Mercy descended from Heaven to enter that cemetery. About to unbar the gates, Justice, with naked, flaming sword, thundered, "Forbear! My claims are unmet, and my demands must first be satisfied before you can enter here." Mercy, saddened, flew back to Heaven. The Son of God stepped forward and said: "Mercy must enter your graveyard, I will meet the claims of Justice." He came, as He said, and the sword of Justice found its sheath in His bosom.

Mercy is towards all men today. God has shut up all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all. If you take your place as a sinner who deserves nothing but judgment, and call for mercy, God will be merciful to you. When the publican with broken heart and smitten breast cried to God to be merciful to him the sinner, he obtained mercy. But when the rich man cried from Hades to Abraham for mercy there was none for him; he was in the abode of the lost where there is no mercy. There is mercy for you now, in this day of grace, if you will but call upon God.

“HE THAT COMETH TO GOD”

(Genesis 4: 1-17)

THIS Scripture brings before us two men, Cain and Abel, the first two men born outside of Eden's garden, and they stand before us as two great leaders. Many people today follow in the way of Cain, and many others in the way of Abel. In fact, the whole human race is divided into two classes—those who value the blood of Christ, as Abel did, and those who, like Cain, despise the blood, and these two men show us the way in which each seeks to approach God.

I have said these two boys were born outside of Eden's garden—not within—for their father and their mother had been driven from the garden of the Lord because of sin. By their one act of disobedience sin had entered, and sin had not only separated them from God, but our first parents were driven out of Eden and the cherubim were placed at the east of the garden with a flaming sword to guard every way to the tree of life. Cain and Abel were born, not when their parents were in innocency, but after they had fallen and were under the sentence of death. They sprang from fallen parents and, like their par-

ents, they were sinners and under the sentence of death; away from God, separated from God by sin.

In those two sons we see the wonderful truth that "there is no difference." There was no difference between the two; both had sprung from fallen parents; both had been nourished at the same breast; both heard the same Divine truths; both played the same games; and both were responsible to God, for they were sinners. Now we have all been born outside of Eden—innocency passed away with that garden. We have all been born in sin and shapen in iniquity, for we too have sprung from fallen parents. That is how we are seen before God. There are two things true of every child of Adam's race; we have all sinned, and we have come short of the glory of God. I know there are degrees of sin. I know there are moral differences. I know there was a great difference between Nicodemus—that wonderful religious leader who would have been a doctor of divinity in our day, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and a model man, a member of the Sanhedrin, and a man who stood head and shoulders above his fellows—I know there was a great difference between him and the sinful woman who came to Sychar's well. They had not sinned alike, but they alike had both sinned, and both came short of the glory of God. She was on a lower scale morally than Nicodemus, yet both were sinners before God. There was a great difference be-

tween Saul of Tarsus, that religious man, that Pharisee of the Pharisees, who, as touching the righteousness of the Law, was blameless—there was a great difference between that man and the thief who was crucified with the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, but both alike were sinners and needed a Saviour.

People think that, because they have not sunk so deep in sin as others, they stand a better chance of getting to Heaven; that God will accept them for their good deeds; that if their good deeds out-weigh their bad deeds, they will be all right in a coming day. Listen to this truth, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." In this respect there is no difference. A little girl was asked why it was that one thief on the cross was saved and the other lost—why one went to Paradise and the other to Hell. Her reply was that she supposed the one thief had not stolen so much as the other. She thought it was a question of how much he had stolen. There was no difference between the two—both had sinned. But one said, "We indeed justly are in this condemnation, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man hath done nothing amiss."

In Old Testament times the children of Israel had to bring a piece of silver money as a ransom for their souls. The rich could not bring more and the poor could not bring less. The rich man might have said, "I want to give more than the half-shekel of the sanctuary," and the poor man

might have said, "I cannot give as much as that." But the atonement money was commanded by God to be a half-shekel for each; nothing more and nothing less would do for God. There was no difference between rich and poor—they both met together, they were all brought to the same platform. So it is today. You may be highly respectable, and because you lead a good, clean life, you may think you stand a much better chance of Heaven than the other man, but whether high-born or low-born, educated or illiterate, rich or poor, all are brought to the same platform before God, so that He might have mercy on all.

Cain and Abel alike were both lost and ruined by the fall. Do you understand you are lost? "Oh," you say, "I don't think anybody is lost until they are in Hell." Oh, my friend, when a person goes to Hell he is lost eternally, lost beyond hope. But if unsaved you are lost to God now, lost as the sheep was lost to the shepherd. Your sin has come in and separated between you and God, and you are ruined and undone, lost to God, the Saviour.

Those two boys were both brought up alike, both had the same privileges, both learned the same truths from their mother's lips. But there was one difference between them and their parents which perhaps caused them to ask, "How is it, father and mother, that you have clothing different from that which we wear? You are clad in the coats of skin, but we have no clothing like

yours." And the answer would have been that that peculiar clothing was provided by God Himself. God had covered them with these wonderful garments after they had sinned, and He had clothed them upon the ground of sacrifice. The blood of the innocent victim had been shed, and they were covered with the garment provided by the sacrifice. Then they would tell their children the story of the fall, how they had sinned, how they were lost to God as a consequence, how they had forfeited Paradise and had been driven out from the garden of God. But they would also tell how God had met their need by that atoning sacrifice and had covered their nakedness with the garments of skin, and they would teach them that if they would approach to God and be accepted by Him then it must be exactly in the same way, for there can be no approach to God except by way of a sacrifice.

When those two boys grew up one became a tiller of the ground and the other a keeper of sheep. The one was a farmer, if you like, and the other a shepherd who tended his flock. Now these two brothers were alike in another respect, they both believed in a Creator God and they both felt their need of a means of approach to God. They both believed in the majesty and holiness of God, but Cain ignored the fact that he needed a sacrifice and a Saviour. He believed only in God the Creator, and so he went to the ground and brought an offering of the fruit thereof to

God. But the ground had been cursed because of the sin of man, and this Cain well knew, yet he brought of the fruit of the cursed ground and offered it to God. No doubt it was the very best that his hands could produce. He had toiled in the field under the noonday sun. He was sincere. He was zealous. He worked hard, and then he builded an altar, and put the fruit of the ground and the labor of his hands upon that altar, and said: "O God, accept me because of my offering." But unto Cain and to his offering the Lord had not respect. We might have approached Cain and asked him, "Did you toil hard for it?" "Yes, I did indeed; I worked in the most strenuous way. No man could have done more. I have done my best, and no man can do better than his best; and I have placed it on the altar and God will not accept my offering." Why would not God accept Cain's gift-offering? Because Cain had omitted certain things which were absolutely essential; he ignored the fact that he was a sinner and he overlooked the need of the blood of atonement. He did not acknowledge that he was under the sentence of death; he forgot his sin, and there was no confession of his guilt; and so he left blood out of the offering. And God could not accept him, simply because he failed to put the death of another between his soul and the righteous requirements of God. He thought he could bring a gift-offering to God, whereas he needed to bring a sacrifice for sin to meet God's righteous claims

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and to put away his sin for, "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

Look around in Christendom today. You see thousands of people bowing at altars, professing to worship the living and true God, but there is no confession of sin on their part—they have never felt the need of the precious blood of Christ to cleanse them from all sin. They are sinners, yet they go to those altars, and kneel before them with no confession of their guilt, no pleading the virtue of the precious blood of Christ. Today people don't like to hear about the blood of Christ. It is fashionable to forget the atoning death of Christ, and so, like Cain, they bring of the fruit of the earth and the work of their own hands. They close their eyes to the fact that they are sinners, and they seek to offer up their prayers and their good deeds to God. What would you think of offering filthy rags to God? "Oh," you say, "no one would ever do that." Well, that is exactly what the Bible says. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"—that is what the sinner's good deeds are in God's sight. If you bring the very best of your good works to God and place them on the altar they will never purchase you an entrance into the glory, for they are as filthy rags in God's sight and they cannot put away your sin. Nothing less than the precious blood of Christ can do that, and God can accept nothing else.

Would you like to see a modern Cain? Come

with me to the New Testament and I will show you one. You observe that religious Pharisee clad in his long garments covered with verses of Scripture. As he leaves his house he is muttering prayers, and as he passes the street corner the crowds cry, "Rabbi, Rabbi." He goes on up to the temple, and there he stands and prays thus with himself: "I thank Thee I am not as other men. I fast twice every week; I give tithes of all I possess. I am not like this publican; I am much better than he is. I am a good fellow. I offer You my very best; I offer You myself." That man went down to his house with his sins upon him, not justified. Why? He never confessed his guilt. He overlooked the fact of sin. He overlooked the fact that he needed a Saviour to save him from his sins and the wrath to come. There is no mention of blood in his offering. It is "I, I, I," nothing but a big "I," "What *I* have done." There are so many like that today. They talk about themselves, and their good works, and they overlook the fact that they are lost and ruined by nature and by practice, and they are blind to the fact that they need the blood of Christ to make atonement for their guilt.

Do you see that lady? She leaves her house with a Bible under her arm. You ask, "Where are you going?" She replies, "I am going to my place of worship." In she goes, and seats herself, and bows her head in prayer. But ask her, "Are your sins forgiven? Do you know Christ as

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your Saviour? Have you ever discovered your lost and ruined condition?" and she gets angry and says, "I don't want to hear anything like that! I have everything I need, I visit the sick, I do the best I can, I attend church, I read my Bible, I pray, and I have as good a chance as anyone." You see, she will not acknowledge her guilt. She has never taken her place as a lost and ruined sinner. She overlooks the fact that she was born in sin. She does not feel her need of Christ as her Saviour. That is "the way of Cain." Cain was a Unitarian. He believed in a God, but he ignored the fact that he was lost and ruined by the fall, and omitted the blood from his offering.

A famous art critic was looking one day at some paintings by the renowned painter, Turner. He could not understand one of the unfinished pictures—none of its points seemed to stand in relation to the others. He withheld his judgment on it, however, because Turner was a wonderful painter, and the critic feared he might do an injustice to his reputation, but, as he was leaving in this disappointed state, Turner came in and taking up his brush added one scarlet dot to the picture. Now it was complete. Then the critic saw the beauty of the painting and how each of its parts stood in beautiful relation to the others, all because Turner, the master, had added that one scarlet dot. And there are men today to whom the way of salvation seems hazy and obscure. They cannot understand it.

They do not see how the facts stand in relation to each other. Why? They lack the scarlet dot—the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without that, everything is hazy, everything is out of place. They will never, never, NEVER be able to see the relationship of one part of the scheme of salvation to the other, so long as they leave out the scarlet dot, the precious blood.

Now would you like to see Abel drawing near to God? He was a sinner just as his brother, he was brought up in the same way, under similar circumstances, he had the same opportunities and was in all respects, except one, like his elder brother, but there was one point of difference. The difference between the two lay in this—while there was no faith in Cain's offering, Abel's offering was marked by faith. "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Abel doesn't go to the field for his sacrifice. No; he goes to the flock, and from the flock he chooses the best lamb. He builds his altar and takes his place beside it as a guilty and lost sinner. He recognizes the truth of the fall, but he places the lamb and its blood between his soul and God. He admits that he is under the sentence of death. He says to God, "I ought to die, but here I bring this spotless lamb to Thee. I place it and its blood between my soul and Thee, O God. Accept me not

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on the ground of my good works, but on the ground of this sacrifice and on the ground of the blood shed. God be merciful to me, the sinner!" And God accepts him because of his sacrifice.

Would you like to see a modern Abel? Look at that poor publican with downcast eyes on the way to the temple. He does not go in boldly as did the Pharisee to speak to God. He takes his place afar off. He smites his breast, the seat of all his trouble. He sees the blood of the offering shed upon the altar and says, "God be merciful to me, the sinner." That man goes down to his house justified—justified on the ground of the blood shed. God accepts him because he places the precious blood between his soul and God.

Do you see that young man leaving his house? He has a large Bible under his arm. You ask him where he is going. He replies that he is going to worship God. You say, "Do you know God?" "Know God? Why, of course I know God, I have known Him for years." "What are your hopes for eternity based on?" you ask him. He says, "My hopes are built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I was a sinner and I should have died. I know that I deserved eternal damnation, but God's blessed Son died that I might have His sacrifice as my only means of salvation, and God has been merciful to me the sinner." That is exactly where we are now—those of us who are saved by grace—we know Christ, we stand upon the value of His sacrifice. Had you

met Abel coming home after the sacrifice and asked him, "Where have you been, Abel?" he could have replied:

"I have been to the altar,
And witnessed the lamb
Burnt wholly to ashes for me.
I've watched its sweet savour
Ascending on high—
Accepted by God for me."

For he was accepted on the ground of that sacrifice. He took his stand on the value that God put upon the lamb, and God accepted him on the ground of his substitute. God sent fire down from Heaven and consumed that sacrifice. At Calvary we see Christ as the Victim, the Lamb of God our Sacrifice. The Eternal Son of God exhausted the fire of judgment, so that now there is no judgment for us; we stand exactly where the fire has been. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

Cain was wroth with his brother Abel. Why? Was it because his own works were wicked, and Abel's were good? No; but because Abel had come in the more excellent way, the way marked by faith, and God had accepted him because he brought a sacrifice with blood. He was not accepted because of anything he had done, but was accepted on the ground of his substitute. Cain would not offer a sacrifice that spoke of bloodshedding. How many are like him today! They do not want the death of Christ. They do not

want a religion that extols the blood of Christ. They call the preaching of the cross, "A religion of the shambles," and say, "We will not have it." And when we tell them that we stand accepted in Christ, accepted by the sacrifice of Calvary, they become angry and say, "We will not have it." Cain despised Abel because he came in the right way. The same way was available to him, but he refused it. The Lord Jesus when here upon earth said of the Pharisees, "You will not enter in yourselves, and when others would come you hinder them," and people today say, "Away with it! Away with such a religion, the religion of blood! We will not have it!" and they are angry. They will not enter in themselves, and they do all they can to hinder others from entering in. They are angry with those who put their trust in the precious blood of Christ.

Cain was wroth with Abel and his countenance fell. He looked down. God made man upright that he might look up into Heaven, into the face of God. You can only look into the face of God by virtue of the blood of Jesus. Abel could look up into Heaven, but the eyes of Cain looked down—his countenance fell. God in His wonderful grace, reasons with him, "Come now," He says, so to speak, "and let us reason together. If thou doest well, wilt thou not be accepted? The same course is open to thee, Cain, and if thou doest as Abel thy brother hath done, thou too wilt be accepted, even as he has been accepted. I am no

Respecter of persons, Cain. Wherever there is faith I accept that faith." But Cain would not listen to God. Sinner, you also now can do well, and if you do you will be accepted. The best you can do is to take the blessed Christ of God. Believe on Him. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." If you want to work the works of God, do the right thing, believe in Christ, and be accepted. Accept Christ, and rest upon His shed blood.

God told Cain: "If thou doest well thou shalt be accepted; if not, sin lieth at the door." Sin lies at your door, reader. Sin lieth at your door now, but the remedy is there also. If you die in your sins and go to Hell you cannot blame anyone but yourself. No man will be in Hell because he would not be accepted by God if he had done the right thing. Every man would have been accepted by God if he had presented the right offering; and the lost will be there because they would not do well, that is, they despised the precious blood and set at naught the blessed Christ of God. Cain would have been accepted, but he would not take the life of that animal. He had no compunction however about taking the life of his brother. The religious Pharisees rejected the blessed Christ of God. They would not have Him as their Messiah. They were very punctilious in tithing mint and rue and cummin, but they had no compunctions about shedding the precious blood of Christ. It was the

religious Jews who slew Him. Religion slew the Christ of God. That is one charge we hold against religion—religion crucified the Lord of Glory.

God knew that Cain had slain his brother. God speaks once, "Where is thy brother?" God speaks twice, and then He brands him. God is speaking to you, reader, speaking in grace. "God speaks once, yea, twice, and man perceiveth it not." He wants you to be saved. God said to Cain, "Where is thy brother Abel?" Cain answered, "I know not." First he was a Unitarian—he did not need the blood. Then he became an agnostic—he said, "I know not." When a man says that, he lays himself open to anything that comes along. But God drives Cain's sin home upon him. He says, "What hast thou done?" That question comes ringing through the ages right down to you today, reader: "What hast thou done?" God would bring your sin home to you, also; for, mark you, He knows all you have done; He knows your whole history. He knows your sin and your guilt, and everything is marked before God, and He asks now, "What hast thou done?"

Now we see Cain, guilty of the murder of Abel, going out of the presence of God and becoming a wanderer on the face of the earth. Isn't that just like the Jews? They were guilty of the murder of Christ, and today the Jews are wanderers without a kingdom, without a country, without a sacrifice, without an altar; wrath is come upon them,

and they are a by-word among the nations. They rejected Christ, they put Him to death, and they are scattered today over the face of the earth.

Cain goes out of the presence of God to the land of Nod. Adam was driven out of the garden, but Cain goes out from the presence of the Lord. The path away from God is downward. Are you, too, going out from the presence of God? The first thing that Cain does is to build a city! He tries to make himself happy without God. There you have the beginning of the world. It commenced with the building of a city by a murderer, and this mark is upon every city since that time—the mark of the murderer has been on every city in this world. He expected to make himself happy without God. "Nod" means "wandering," so man has gone away from God and become a wanderer. Lamech takes to himself two wives—he introduces polygamy, and that is abroad in the world today. In Genesis 2 we have the divine institution of marriage. God built the woman out of the rib taken from man, and He presented her to the man. The Divine idea is, one woman for each man, but Lamech brings in polygamy, and that is increasing on every hand today, proving conclusively that things are heading up quickly for the end. Cain had three sons, Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-Cain, and in their different occupations we see how men are seeking to make themselves happy without God. Jabal kept cattle, and in him we see the commercial world introduced—men seek-

ing to gain riches and possessions. Jubal was the father of such as handle the harp and the organ, and in their musical pleasures they tried to forget the death of Abel, just as today they try to forget the death of Christ. Man tried to stamp out the remembrance of Abel, but God says, "He being dead yet speaketh." Tubal-Cain was an artificer in brass and iron, introducing the world of science and art, the source of many wonderful things whereby men forget God.

Next we see Enoch going into Heaven, and after his rapture we read of judgment by the flood. Very soon God will take the Church to Heaven, and this will be followed by the pouring out of His judgment upon this scene. All the wonderful cities and works of man will crumble to the dust, for God is going to destroy this great system built up by man and energized by Satan. Let me warn you, dear young friend, Christ is coming to take the Church of God to the Father's house. He may come today. When He does, then judgment will fall on this world, overwhelming judgment for its rejection of Christ. While you have the opportunity, while the value of the blood is being pressed upon you, put all your confidence upon the atoning work of Christ.

ESAU, THE PROFANE PERSON

(Gen. 25: 29-34; Heb. 12: 17)

IN the Holy Scriptures many warnings are given us in the lives of men and women in order that we may avoid their mistakes and profit by their failures. The Lord Jesus held up the wife of Lot as a warning, saying, "Remember Lot's wife." Balaam is spoken of in the Scriptures as a warning. The people of the old world before the flood, and the inhabitants of the cities of the plain, are set forth as ensamples of sinners, and their doom as warnings. Then in Esau, we have a man who is called by God "*a profane person*." It is seldom that the Holy Spirit stigmatizes a man, but Esau is spoken of in the Word of God as one who was profane because he sold that which was of priceless value for one morsel of food.

Esau knew better. He was taught to value his birthright. He was a young man who had had great opportunities and was most highly privileged. His father was Isaac, one of the most wonderful men in the Old Testament, for he was given to Abraham as the child of promise, and he had been laid upon the altar, and received back from the dead. Esau's mother was Rebekah, who had been sent for by Abraham and conducted across the desert by Abraham's servant to be a

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bride for Isaac. What a wonderful home Esau was brought up in! What wonderful light from God was there! His grandfather was Abraham, the man of faith, the father of the faithful.

Two boys, Esau and Jacob, were born to Isaac and Rebekah, and of these Esau was the firstborn, and the birthright therefore belonged to him. Esau should have valued this honor and blessing above every other thing, but he did not. And how many there are who have been born into godly homes, who have had the best of parents and training, have enjoyed much in the way of privileges, and yet, though they knew better, have never valued the things that belonged to their precious souls. Let me say that, where there have been great opportunities and great light, judgment will be more severe. You will recall how the Lord Jesus spoke of the cities where His wonderful works had been done. He saw they had been exalted to Heaven and would be brought down to Hell: exalted to Heaven in privileges and responsibilities and brought down to Hell and judgment. Esau was thus exalted; he heard and saw the most wonderful things and daily handled divine truths, but he let them all slip through his fingers, and thereby lost his precious soul.

Esau married a wife against the wishes of his father and mother. He set up a house of his own, and the whole business was a grief to his parents. Like Nimrod and Ishmael, Esau was a cunning hunter, unspiritual and worldly, and he

is the type of the man of the world. You also may be a man of the world, a keen business man, one who can drive a hard bargain, and you may pride yourself in the fact that no one can get the better of you, that you are abreast of everyone else in business, and yet when it comes to the question of your soul, you are perhaps selling it for a mess of pottage.

Some men are hunting for riches, and, like Esau, are faint in the pursuit of them. Riches, even when attained, cannot satisfy the soul. They leave the hunter, like Esau, faint, dissatisfied, disappointed. Yet how many men have sold their souls for riches. Andrew Carnegie is reported to have said, "Millionaires seldom smile and never sing." Barney Barnato was one of the richest men in the world; he had accumulated enormous wealth in the diamond-fields of South Africa, so that he was known as "the diamond king." Was he satisfied with his hunting in that field? A man had to be hired to follow him everywhere he went, for fear he would commit suicide; and one day, when on a steamer sailing the South Atlantic, while his attendant was not watching him carefully enough, Barney Barnato rushed to the rail of the vessel, flung himself into the ocean, and committed suicide by drowning.

Do honors satisfy? We all know they do not. Thousands have reached the top of the tree, but their pre-eminence has left their hearts unsatisfied. Many are hunting after pleasures. Do they

satisfy? There is no place, in recent years, so much given to pleasure as Monte Carlo. Everything there exists for pleasure, but in the days of its highest glories there was no place on earth for its size where there were so many suicides as in Monte Carlo.

Here is Esau: he starts out in the early morning for the hunting-field; he hunts all day and comes home at night tired and hungry. He goes forth hungry, and comes back hungry. Many are like that today; they go out to hunt in the great world and return disappointed; they have not found what they sought.

Are you, like Esau, spending your labor for that which satisfieth not, hungry and dissatisfied when God wants you to let your soul delight itself in fatness? How can a world that is away from God and lying under judgment give you satisfaction? All its streams are tainted with sin. To the woman at Sychar's well the Lord said, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again;" and "Thirst again" is written over every stream at which the men of this world seek to allay the thirst of their souls. Did not Solomon try them all? And he said, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Burns, the Scottish poet, tried them and said,

"Pleasures are like poppies spread;
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow-flake on the river,
One moment seen, then gone forever."

Hungry Esau saw his brother Jacob with a steaming-hot pottage of lentils, and he craved it. "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage," he said to Jacob. But Jacob answered, "Not so fast, my brother. I have first to talk business with you. You have a birthright, and I have heard you say that you do not put much value on it. I will make a bargain with you. If you will sell me your birthright, you can have the pottage." "Done," said Esau; "I think something for my body is to be preferred to this birthright." It is settled there and then. Jacob gets that which is valuable, and Esau has that which is of little value, and is but for a moment.

Think of the birthright! It appertains to the firstborn, and honor and blessing were connected therewith. It brought the possessor into the line of testimony, into the family of the Messiah, and the double portion of the father's goods. Yet Esau sold that which was priceless for one mess of pottage. He was governed by his appetite, and despised the excellency and dignity pertaining to the heritage of Abraham's family. For a moment's pleasure he sold the blessing of years; he put body before soul, Hell before Heaven, natural before spiritual. Was ever before a morsel of food so dearly bought as this? He would have changed it all later, if he could; but it had passed out of his hands forever. Though he sought the blessing with tears, he found it not.

I plead with you not to sell your soul for a mess

of Satan's pottage. I beseech you to look at these things in the light of eternity, and be wise for yourself. Esau was caught by a mess of pottage. What appeals to you? Like a skilled fisherman Satan knows the bait that suits you. He is a hunter. Of the foolish woman in Proverbs, it is said that she hunts for the precious life; Satan hunts for your precious soul. He is called a roaring lion, a dragon, a serpent, and is likened to a fox for cunning, and he it is who seeks to destroy you. He knows your weakness better than you know it, and the attraction he offers you may allure you; but will it last? Will it pay? Take a sober view of the matter. Put your soul on the one side, and all that the world can offer you on the other; let the hand of God hold the scales, and then observe how the scale which holds your soul goes down, and the world with its boasted all goes up, for these are as nothing compared with the value of your precious soul. Are you rightly valuing your soul, or are you counting it as a matter of little importance? Esau said, speaking contemptuously, "What profit shall the birthright do to me?" He did not know its worth; he parted with it as a thing of little value. He sold it in his heart before he sold it in the open market. And what about you?

Judas sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. He made the bargain with the religious leaders, a bargain which he regretted, for the money burned his fingers and he had to cast it from him. Are

you making a bad bargain?—one that you will regret for all eternity? When I was a boy I read a story in one of our school-books about the man who took his cow to market to sell it, and, when he came home in the evening and his wife asked him what he got for the cow, all he had to show was a handful of green spectacles. He sold his cow for things of no value. You judge that man to have been a fool, and rightly so. Are you, my unsaved friend, not more foolish than he?

Esau says, "I am at the point to die." He did not look beyond the present moment. Moses looked at things with different eyes. He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esau chose rather that which was only for a season, and gave up that which was everlasting. He was like you, perhaps, saying, with many others, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

But Jacob with all his faults valued the things of God. And look how he died, died in faith! His death-bed is the happiest death-bed recorded in the Bible. How do you expect to die? You cannot die like Jacob if you live like Esau. No wonder that Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his!" Not like Esau's, which would be one of weeping and wailing, for he sought the blessing with tears, and he cried with a loud and bitter cry when he lost the blessing connected with the birthright.

But Esau's tears did not avail. He could not recover it; it was gone for ever. And you may make a deal with Satan about your soul that will settle the matter eternally. There was no second chance allowed to Esau, and there may be no other opportunity than this one for you.

The blessing passed into the hand of Jacob, for his father Isaac blessed him with that which pertained to the firstborn ere Esau arrived. Esau came too late, and lost the blessing. Are you a procrastinator, one who keeps putting off the question of salvation until another time? Beware lest you miss it! For miss it you may, if you do not come when the Lord Jesus invites you.

Then think of the descendants of Esau. They became the scoffers of a later day. They cried to the watchman, "Watchman, what of the night?" and the watchman said, "The morning cometh, and also the night." Are you today making light of the Lord's return, saying, "What of the night?" "Where is the promise of His coming?" Beware, ye despisers and mockers, the awful night is coming soon that will overtake all the descendants of Esau.

It was one of Esau's descendants who betrayed David. Doeg the Edomite had no heart for David, the Lord's Anointed. Doeg slew Ahimelech and eighty-five priests; he had no heart for God's king and no heart for God's priests. Are you one of those who have no heart for Christ or His people?

In the book of Obadiah we read about a day of judgment that is coming for Esau's descendants. In that day they will find their portion with the unbelievers. He charges them with indifference to God, to His house, and His city. Indifference had marked them, and now God marks them for judgment.

Think of the "afterwards" connected with Esau. "Afterwards he sought the blessing with tears," but tears could not bring back the birth-right nor cancel the agreement. And think of the rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, *afterwards* in hades crying for a drop of water. "Son, remember," said Abraham to him. Think of the bitterness of soul of one in Hell looking back, remembering the privileges and opportunities he had had, with a memory which never dies. But think again of the "afterwards" of the child of God, "Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel, and *afterwards* receive me into glory."

Thank God, the matter has not been finally settled yet; the door is open for you now, and you can have the blessing. Now you have offered to you the golden opportunity to take Christ, and to do so assures to you eternal happiness and bliss. Decide now, ere it be for ever too late: for to sell your soul for nought will mean everlasting shame and contempt.

REDEMPTION BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

(Exod. 12: 1-24)

THIS beautiful Gospel picture is a wonderful foreshadowing of God's marvellous plan of redemption. The Old Testament Scriptures abound in these striking types, and they everywhere portray the story of redeeming love.

God takes up the children of Israel as a figure, and brings before us the ground upon which He can liberate them from Egyptian bondage, that is, through the blood of the Passover lamb, and thereby gives us an illustration of the manner in which He can deliver souls today—setting at liberty those who are held captive by Satan, through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God.

In the opening chapters of Exodus you find the children of Israel down in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh, who makes them serve with rigor. Pharaoh is a picture of Satan. Egypt is a picture of this world, and Satan is the one who holds men of this world in bondage today, for they are slaves to sin and Satan.

It was through no fault of their own that the children of Israel were found down in Egypt—they went there with their father Jacob—and similarly it is through no fault of ours that we are in bondage to sin and Satan; for we were all

involved in the ruin brought in when our first father, Adam, fell. And just as the Israelites were held completely in bondage under the authority of Pharaoh, in Egypt, so today the sons of Adam's race are bondservants of Satan, led captive by him at his will, for "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Men may boast about freedom, and glory in their liberty, yet all the while they are slaves to sin and Satan, for our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "Whosoever committeth sin is a servant of sin," and, "All have sinned."

It cost Great Britain millions of dollars to free the slaves of the West Indies, but the wealth of this world and all the combined efforts of man cannot liberate one soul from the bondage of Satan. None can do that but God Himself, and He can do it only through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, through the precious blood of the Lamb of God.

Egypt was a wonderful country, and had a remarkable river. In this respect it stood out in contrast to the Land of Canaan, for whereas Egypt was watered by its river, the Land of Canaan was watered by the dew of Heaven. Men in Egypt were independent of Heaven, and there they fed upon flesh to the full. And here again Egypt is a type of the world, for the world is a place where man seeks to make himself independent of Heaven, and at the same time labors to gratify the flesh, for in the world everything ministers to the flesh and keeps man away from God.

But the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God. They cried unto the Lord to deliver them, and that cry was heard in Heaven, for God is always ready to hear the cry of one who feels his bondage. God's answer was: "I have heard, I have seen, I am come down, I will bring them out," and in His wonderful grace God tells them that He will deliver them from the bondage of Pharaoh and bring them out of the Land of Egypt into a land flowing with milk and honey.

Have you ever called to God for deliverance? Has your cry ever gone up into the ears of God? God is ever ready to hear the groaning of one who feels the bondage of Satan, of one under the conviction of sin. That is what causes joy in Heaven—a sinner repenting and turning to God. For God has come down in His wonderful grace in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to make Himself known, and to deliver sinners from the bondage of sin and the thralldom of Satan.

God sent by the hand of Moses this command: "Let My people go." And what, think you, was Pharaoh's answer? "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Pharaoh defied the living God. And as it was then, so is it now. Oh, how men defy God today! They stretch forth their puny hand against God and say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him? I know not the Lord." They refuse to hear and obey the voice of God.

To teach Pharaoh His power, God then plagued the land of Egypt nine times over. He wrought His signs in that land, and yet, in spite of all, Pharaoh hardened his heart and still defied Jehovah; and at last God said, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh." And, mark you, if after all God's visitations upon you, if after all His warnings, you remain a Christ-rejecter, there is one more plague that will surely come upon you—and that is Death! Death is inevitable; you cannot get out of it, you must face this dread reality. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Yes, there is something which follows death—and that is the judgment! Oh, beware, for if you refuse to obey the voice of the Lord, you have to face death and judgment.

God then announces that He is going to put "a difference" between the children of Israel and the children of Egypt. But when God says, "I will put a difference," Satan says, "There is no difference." Satan deceives you today, and makes you think there is no difference between you, unsaved one, and a Christian; and so you say, "We are all bound for Heaven—our faces are all in the right direction. You are entitled to take your way and I am entitled to mine, but we will all turn up all right in the end."

Again when God says, "There is no difference," Satan, the deceiver, says, "There is a difference." In Romans we read, "For there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of

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God.” But when God says that, Satan says, “You are not as bad as others.” And he puts a great difference between you and some that you know. Now, if you are not saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do not appreciate the efficacy of His atoning work, you will not see Heaven, but like the vilest sinner upon earth you will descend to Hell, doomed and damned forever. In so far as being lost is concerned there is no difference, but if you know the value of the blood, if you are sheltered under its atoning virtue, then there is a great difference between you and the people of the world, for the people of the world are outside and exposed to judgment, while the people of God are sheltered by the precious blood of Christ. God makes the difference, and the difference lies in the blood.

Moreover, He says to them, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you.” The day of their redemption was to be the commencement of a new history for them. Up to this point, they had been held in bondage and had served Pharaoh, but now, from the moment that they are sheltered by the blood, they are going to have a new beginning and a new history. I wonder if you have had a new beginning. Have you had the experience called conversion? Have you been liberated from the bondage of sin and Satan? Have you passed from death unto life? Have you been born from above? Have you at a definite time in

your life turned to God, repenting and judging yourself? If you have had no new beginning you are still under the dominion of sin and Satan. You may have lived many years a moral and upright life, but if you have never had that experience called conversion then you are still unsaved, still outside of the family of God and exposed to Divine wrath on account of your sin, for it is only by being sheltered under the blood that you can be secure from judgment.

God tells the children of Israel that He is going to deliver them through the death of a lamb. "Take a lamb." That was the basis of their blessing, the ground of their security. That lamb pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ, for in the days of John the Baptist, when the Lord Jesus Christ walked beside the Jordan, John bare record saying: "Behold the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world." Did not Abraham say to his son Isaac, "God will provide Himself a lamb?" Yes, and in God's blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the Lamb provided by God Himself.

As in Egypt God delivered Israel by the death of the Paschal lamb, so Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. God has revealed Himself in the Person of His Son, who came to settle the sin question by shedding His own blood which shelters the sinner who trusts Him from the righteous wrath of God. It is only through the death of His beloved Son that God can redeem and deliver and save.

Several years ago I was up in Cumberland, in the North of England, looking for a certain farmhouse. I could not locate it, and so when I came to a little house I stopped to inquire, and in response to my knock an old lady came out. I said, "Can you tell me where the Slack house is?" To my surprise the lady answered me in broad Scotch, and so I entered into conversation with her. After I had spoken to her for a while I asked her about her sins, and she broke down and wept and said, "You know I have never been able to redeem myself." Ah, yes; she wept because she had not been able to redeem herself. I told her the Gospel story, the good tidings, how God had come down in the Person of His Son to redeem guilty man. I told her how we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and I learned that she had never before heard about God's way of redemption. She had been trying to do the impossible: she had been trying to redeem herself. Could the children of Israel, that nation of slaves, by any means redeem themselves? It was an utter impossibility. For them and for us there was no other way of salvation but through God's plan of redemption, the blood of the Lamb.

The Paschal lamb had to be without blemish; not a single flaw could be allowed. If a spot or a blemish were found in the lamb, it would not be fit for sacrifice; if its blood is to avail for shelter,

the lamb must be perfect. And our Lord Jesus Christ, the Antitype of the Passover Lamb, was without spot, as we read in 1 Peter 1, "Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." He was God's spotless Son, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

After the lamb was taken it had to be kept from the tenth to the fourteenth day of the month. Thus it was under observation for four days. And the Lord Jesus Christ was under observation in His public ministry of three-and-a-half years, and all had to say, "We find no fault in this Man." God the Father testified concerning Him, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Satan tempted Him for forty days at the beginning of His public ministry, and had to retire baffled and defeated. At Calvary again Satan, the prince of this world, came in his final onslaught upon the Lord, but he found nothing in Him. The demons' testimony was, "We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." His enemies tempted Him, and He could challenge them in these words, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Pilate and Herod agreed that they could find no fault in Him. The dying thief exclaimed, "This Man hath done nothing amiss;" and the centurion who had charge of the crucifixion declared, "Truly this was a righteous Man." Tested by God and by Satan, by men and by demons, during His whole pathway here and in

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His public ministry, He was ever found without blemish, and fully proved to be the One who could offer Himself as a Sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God, to die as the Substitute in the place of guilty sinners.

Then the lamb must be killed. The *living* lamb could not deliver Israel from the destroying angel. The lamb had to be taken and slain: its blood must be shed. And this tells us that the incarnation alone of our Lord Jesus Christ could not bring us into relationship with God. His wonderful life, spotless, holy, flawless, could not bring us near to God. Christ must suffer for our sins, the Just for the unjust, that we might be brought to God. He must indeed be put to death in the flesh. We could never have been delivered from this present evil world except by His giving Himself for our sins.

Today people speak admiringly of the life of Christ, and try to take Him as an example to be followed. But His life alone could never put away sin. It took His blood, His death, to atone for sin and deliver the sinner. The only way is by the way of the blood. The Lamb must be slain.

Then they had to "take the blood." Mark this: The lamb might be taken and slain, but that would not avail without their taking of the blood. "The life of the flesh is in the blood," and the life must be taken in order that the blood may be available as a means of shelter to them, so that the plague should not come upon them to destroy them.

That remarkable preacher, Christmas Evans, when dying said, "I thank God I have never preached the Gospel without having the blood in the basin." Oh, how many preachers today do not have "the blood in the basin!" They have water in the basin, maybe; but they do not know what the old Welsh preacher knew, to make much of the blood of Christ, if sinners are to be saved; for the death of Christ alone shelters from the judgment of God.

"And they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of their house." Observe they did not put it on the threshold. No, it was left for "this enlightened day and age" to trample under foot the precious blood! Men today despise the blood, they slight the precious blood of Christ, they put it on the threshold, as it were, and trample it under foot.

God says, "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and *when I see the blood I will pass over you.*" They did not put it on the inside for their own eye, but they put it on the outside for the eye of God, for the blood is always for the eye of God. "No blood" meant judgment, but blood on the door-posts and lintel meant that death had already taken place for that house, and the destroyer could not enter—he passed over. Where the lamb had been slain, there the firstborn was sheltered by the blood, but if there was no blood upon the door that meant no

substitute had been sacrificed on behalf of the firstborn, and there the destroyer entered and the firstborn was slain. If you are not sheltered by the blood of Christ you are exposed to judgment, just as the firstborn in the home not protected by the blood of the lamb was exposed to the angel of death. The blood of Jesus Christ alone can shelter you from coming wrath.

Notice the things they had to do. They had to take the lamb and sacrifice it; they had to put the blood in the basin; then they had to apply the blood to the door-posts and to the lintel, for unless there was this personal application judgment would fall. So it is today. My friend, you must have a definite dealing with God about the question of your sin. You may know the Bible. You may know about the life and death of Christ and His atonement, but unless you have personally exercised faith in Him, unless you have put your trust in His precious blood, then you are still exposed to the second death.

Another thing they had to use was hyssop. "Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood." The hyssop speaks of man's weakness. You remember Solomon spake of trees from the cedars of Lebanon down to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. The cedars speak of man in his greatness and strength. But the hyssop springing out of the wall speaks of man in his weakness. They dipped this hyssop into the blood and applied it to the door-posts and the lintel. So

it is today. The sinner must take his stand before God and acknowledge his sinnership, his nothingness, his weakness, ere he can have shelter under the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is after this personal application of the blood that God says, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." He did not want to see their characters described upon the door-posts. He did not want to see there a list of their good works. He did not want to see a list of their prayers. No! But He did say, "When I see the BLOOD I will pass over you." He looked at them through the blood and was satisfied—He passed over them. So it is today. God sees through the blood those who have trusted His Son. He is satisfied, and He passes over them.

Now notice something more that God says about the lamb. It had to be "roast with fire." The fire speaks of judgment, God's judgment upon Christ. Men want Christ apart from His death altogether. They speak of His life, they acknowledge Him to be the greatest Man who ever lived, and they want to be followers of the Man Christ Jesus. But that is not God's way of salvation. Christ's holy life could never save one sinner. The lamb must be roast with fire. Christ must come under the judgment of God. Men say He died as a martyr, that He died for His principles, but God says, He died for sin. The wrath of God which could damn a universe was poured out on Him in order that you might be saved and

sheltered from coming wrath. Oh, think of the sufferings of Christ! For there in the lamb roast with fire you have a type of the Holy One coming under the heavy wrath of God. The judgment of God that was rightfully due to me fell upon Him and He exhausted it.

Now I want to take you down into the Land of Egypt to visit certain houses and hear what the inmates have to say. We go to the house of Reuben. His firstborn son is there, and he loves the boy. We ask, "Reuben, do you love that boy?" "Oh," says Reuben, "that is my firstborn, he is the pride of our family; I love him with all my heart." We say, "Reuben, do you know what night this is?" "Yes, this is the Passover night," says Reuben. "Well, what provision have you made for that boy you love?" And there he stands speechless. He dotes on the boy, yet he has made no provision to shelter him from the destroyer, for the blood has not been applied and his son stands exposed to judgment. The boy says, "Father, father, if you love me see that the blood is applied to the door-posts and lintel." The father hurries and kills the lamb and applies the blood, and the boy is safe. You say you love your soul, you value your soul; yet you are careless and indifferent concerning its welfare. You are even now under judgment, and that judgment will fall on all who are not protected by the blood. Unsheltered by the blood, you are unsaved. Oh, sinner, wake up before it is too late

and you lose your precious soul, for there is no other way of escape from the wrath to come but by the blood of Christ!

We go next to Simeon's house and we say, "Simeon, do you know what night this is?" "Oh, yes," says Simeon; "I know it right well. I know as well as you do what night this is." We say, "Well, what provision have you made for your firstborn?" Simeon says, "You mind your own business and I'll mind mine. I do not want to argue with you. You have your way and I'll have my way. I do not want any interference from you. That's the kind of a man I am!" That is like many men today. When you speak to them about their soul's welfare, they become indignant. They will speak with you courteously about politics, and anything and everything else, but the moment they are approached concerning their soul's salvation they get angry and say, "Mind your own business." They lose their precious souls because they do not seek refuge in the precious blood of Christ.

Then we go into a third house, and we find death has already taken place in that house, for the lamb has been slain and the shed blood has been applied to the door-posts and to the lintel. The father is standing singing, and all his family are singing with him. We say, "Oh, Abraham, you seem so happy!" and he says, "I may well be happy!" We ask, "What is the ground of your happiness?" He says, "The ground for our

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happiness is outside there—it is the blood—and I have the Word of God for it that when He sees the blood He will pass over us.” We ask him, “Do you not think you are a bit previous? Should you not wait for the midnight hour to see whether you are safe or not?” “No, no,” he says; “I know God, I have proved God, I know His Word stands sure; He has said, ‘When I see the blood I will pass over you,’ and I believe God.” That is wonderful. He is certain, safe, and secure, simply because the blood is there and his firstborn is sheltered by that blood. He can sing, “Hallelujah, I’m depending on the blood!” He believes. He has placed his faith in the blood of the lamb and in the Word of God, and he is happy because his firstborn is safe.

But we go into the fourth home. It too is protected by the blood. There it is on the door-posts and the lintel. We go in and we find the family weeping. We say, “Why are you weeping, Isaac?” “Well might I weep!” he says; “Do you not know what night this is? This is the night of the passover, and God is going to pass through the land, and I do not know whether we will be safe or not.” “Isaac,” we ask, “have you placed the blood on the door-posts and lintel?” “Of course we have.” “And does not God say, ‘When I see the blood I will pass over you?’ ” “Of course He said that.” Then we ask him, “Why do you not then trust God? Why are you not resting on His Word?” “Oh,” he answers, “how am I to

know? We will have to wait for the midnight hour to see whether or not He will pass over." Here are two men in exactly the same position. Both have obeyed God as to the blood of sprinkling, and both are sheltered equally by that blood, but the one rejoices in his security, and the other is fearful and trembling. Yet the one is as safe and secure as the other. How many are like that today! They have believed in the blood, they are trusting in Christ, and yet they lack assurance. They forget that God has said, "When I see the BLOOD I will pass over you." If they would only rest upon the Word of God and depend upon the blood of Christ, they also would be able to sing, "Hallelujah, I'm depending on the BLOOD!"

There is a very interesting Jewish tradition connected with the Passover in Egypt. It refers to a father and his firstborn son. The father's hopes were all centered in his boy, but of course being the firstborn he would be slain if the blood was not applied to the door-posts and lintel of his house. This task his father had entrusted to a servant. Late that night the son asked his father if he was perfectly sure the blood had been applied to the door-posts and the lintel. He assured him that it had all been attended to, for a trusted servant had been instructed to apply the blood. Shortly before midnight the boy went to his father and said, "Father, I am not sure that the blood has been put on the door-posts and

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the lintel. It is nearly midnight. Take me in your arms and let me see the blood on the door-posts so that I may know that I am perfectly safe." The father hurried with him to the door, and to his own consternation there was no blood. He had trusted the servant, and evidently he had neglected his duty. Now the midnight hour was nearing, and there he stood with his firstborn, his lovely child, and he was not protected by the blood. He hurried and took the lamb, and killed it, and applied the blood to the side-posts and lintel. Now he carries his son out again and the boy sees the blood there. He can rest now, for he is perfectly safe and secure behind the blood, and the plague shall not be upon him to destroy him.

Oh, my friend, how is it with you? Do you know your sins are forgiven? Are you sheltered by the blood of Christ? If not, you are exposed to the wrath of God, and the midnight hour approaches. When the destroyer comes forth you will go down in death, because judgment falls where there is no atoning blood. The plague was not upon those who were sheltered by the blood of the lamb; death had already been there in the person of a substitute; but wherever there was a house unprotected by blood there was death, and weeping and wailing. Mark you, if you despise the precious blood of Christ, you must weep and wail and gnash your teeth throughout the countless ages of eternity, but on the other hand, through the precious blood of the Lamb of God, you can be safe and secure now and forever.

THE PROCLAMATION OF PEACE

“When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee an answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it” (Deut. 20: 10-12).

THIS deeply impressive Scripture is brimful of Gospel teaching. God gave to His ancient people, Israel, some wonderful laws in which there were foreshadowings of this day of grace and of the Gospel of peace, which we now proclaim. God is a merciful God: He delights in mercy, and is slow to execute judgment, and thus it is written that “Judgment is His strange work.” All this is set before us in the Scripture which we are about to consider.

“When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.” God commanded that there must be a proclamation of peace before there was an execution of judgment. This brings before us in a striking way what God is doing now. The world is in opposition to God, at enmity with God. Men are enemies of God and His blessed Son. God must judge this world, judge it unsparingly for its sin, and

the time is ripening fast for that judgment, but before it is executed He makes a proclamation of peace. In Israel's day those who were to be the instruments of judgment upon a city were first to be the messengers of peace to that city. Today the world is exposed to wrath, wrath ready to be revealed from Heaven, but the One who will come as Judge is at this moment a Saviour proclaiming peace. And those who are now the messengers of peace will later return to this world with the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes to execute judgment. That judgment has been long predicted, but mercy has held back its execution upon guilty man so that the Gospel of peace should be fully proclaimed.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was here in the days of His flesh, He came to Nazareth, and as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And He closed the book. Why did He close it just there? Why did He not finish the sentence? The last clause of the sentence is,

“And the day of vengeance of our God,” and He read it not, for He was not then declaring vengeance but proclaiming peace. “The day of vengeance” is future, and awaits the end of the acceptable year of the Lord, but it will come upon all who have refused the offer of peace. Did the men of Nazareth open their hearts and surrender to Him, when He came proclaiming peace? Nay. They were filled with wrath, and thrust Him out of the city and led Him to the brow of the hill that they might cast Him down headlong.

Let me draw your attention to the world today. It is a place where men try to make themselves happy without God. “The whole world lieth in the wicked one,” and the inhabitants are at enmity with God. It is marked by carelessness, lawlessness, and hatred to God. When God sent His Son into this world they cast Him out and said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” Satan has so lulled men to sleep, that they think everything is secure, while the dark clouds of judgment are gathering and ready to burst upon this ungodly scene at any moment.

You will recall how the men of Jericho barred the entrance of the children of Israel into their city. Jericho was a great city, the walls were high and the gates were brass, and the inhabitants kept their city straitly shut up, determined that Israel should not capture it. They thought they were safe and secure, hidden behind their walls, but theirs was only a false security. The

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spies entered Jericho, and all sought their lives, from the king downwards. Only one heart and one home was open to them, and that was Rahab's. She believed the message, she hid the messengers, "She received the spies with peace." How like the world around us today, bolted and barred against God, and only here and there do we find a heart and home opened to God's Gospel, one who returns an answer of peace. But just as the walls of Jericho fell down before the Ark, which is a type of Christ, so all opposition will give way before the Lord at His coming in judgment.

Do you remember how the Lord pictures this in the parable of the strong man armed who keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace? The strong man armed is Satan, his palace is the world, and unconverted men and women are his goods. They are in peace, but it is a false peace, like that in Jeremiah's day when they daubed the walls with untempered mortar saying, "Peace, Peace," when there was no peace. When a sinner is awakened as to the realities of eternity and becomes anxious about his soul, then Satan seeks to lull him to sleep with his lie of "Peace, Peace." It was a rude awakening to the people of Jericho when the walls of their city fell before the Ark and judgment descended upon them; and men and women will have a rude awakening from Satan's false peace on that day which God hath appointed for the judgment of this world.

Now just as God commanded Israel to demand surrender and make an offer of peace to these cities, so He now calls you to repent and believe the Gospel. Israel's call to surrender, to lay down the arms of rebellion, was the first requirement, for otherwise there could be no peace. It is told concerning a French Admiral that when his fleet was defeated he offered Lord Nelson his hand, but Nelson refused it, saying, "Your sword first." The weapons of rebellion must first be laid down. God calls you, sinner, to repent, to surrender. Why hold out any longer and continue to fight against God, when you know full well that in the end you must be defeated?

There was an offer of peace to the city: there is an offer of peace to you today. Today peace is being proclaimed. Christ has made peace by His death upon the cross. At Calvary the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. In His death righteousness and peace have kissed each other. His blood has made peace and now He comes and preaches peace to those who are near and those who are far off. It is proclaimed to all, and those who believe are justified by faith, and have peace with God. Have you accepted this offer of peace? There can be no peace made on man's side, for man is at enmity with God, but God has judged sin in the death of His Son; and now it is written that the God of peace has raised our Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead.

"If it make thee an answer of peace and open

unto thee." It was at the option of the people in the besieged city at that day, to resist or to surrender, and men now are held responsible by God for the way they treat the Gospel. They may refuse it or make an answer of peace; they may resist or they may surrender. If you continue to hold out it will mean judgment, but on the other hand, if you throw open the door of your heart and surrender, it will mean blessing. By nature you are at enmity with God, but He wants you to be reconciled to Him, and for this purpose He has lengthened out the day of grace for you. What will it be? Peace or war, life or death, grace or judgment?

Now I wish to show you how this works out in the New Testament. When our Lord Jesus Christ made peace by the blood of His cross, He took His seat at the Father's right hand. Then the Holy Spirit came down, and the messengers went forth preaching peace by Jesus Christ. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation." But you know how the messengers were treated by the cities to which they carried the glad tidings of peace. The first great city to hear the proclamation was the city of Jerusalem. There dwelt the men who had stained their hands with the blood of the Son of God. Peter stood up and charged home upon them their guilt of rejecting the Messiah, but showed them

also how God had raised Him from the dead and made Him Lord and Christ. When they heard that, they were pricked in their heart and said, "What shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent," that is, Surrender, throw down your weapons, and "be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ." That day three thousand surrendered and made an answer of peace.

After Stephen was stoned to death, the messengers were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching peace. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto the Samaritans. Those in that city gave him an answer of peace; they opened their hearts, they threw down the arms of rebellion, they surrendered.

When Peter was commanded to go to the house of Cornelius he went with a message of peace. Cornelius met him and said, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Then Peter opened his mouth and said, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)." These Gentiles there and then made him an answer of peace; they surrendered, they accepted God's gracious offer.

When the Gospel was brought to Europe by God's messengers, Paul and Silas, that continent was in darkness, without the glad tidings. These servants of God went first to the riverside at Philippi and found some women there, and while

Paul preached Lydia's heart was opened. The next thing was, she opened her house, and a work of God was begun in that city. But if Lydia's heart was opened by God, there was another woman in the city whose heart was closed by Satan. This poor woman was a demoniac, and she followed Paul and Silas trying to patronize them, but when Paul perceived that she was in the hands of Satan, he commanded the unclean spirit to come out of her. Her deliverance from the thralldom of Satan stirred up her masters against the Lord's servants and they determined that they would fight and hold out against this new thing. They persuaded the magistrates to punish Paul and Silas, and thus the messengers of God were beaten with stripes and thrust into the inner prison, the jailor being charged to keep them safely. But at midnight they sang, for though their bodies were in prison the enemy could not imprison their spirits. Their prayers and praises rang throughout that jail, and then the walls began to rock, and the jailor himself was so shaken to the very foundation of his being he might well have thought that the day of judgment had arrived. But Paul spoke to him, "Do thyself no harm," and he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "Surrender!" And down went his weapons as his eyes were turned to the Lord Jesus who gave him peace.

Then the Gospel was carried to Thessalonica, and there again the messengers found opposition. While they preached to the Thessalonians another King, One Jesus, many were determined to hold out against the proclamation, but some made an answer of peace, and turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from Heaven.

Paul next went to the city of Athens, the seat of learning in that day. His soul was stirred as he beheld their idolatry and he was especially moved by the inscription on one altar, "To the unknown God." Standing in the midst of them on Mars' Hill he proclaimed, "Him whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." But as Paul made the proclamation of peace, some mocked, others said, "We will hear you again," but some surrendered and made an answer of peace. One was a judge in the city, but at the thought of meeting such a Judge as the Lord Jesus Christ he surrendered.

Those who surrendered to Israel became tributaries and servants. That is exactly what happens to those who submit to Christ. They have peace with God, and they delight to serve Him. They have changed masters. At one time we served sin and Satan, but now like the Thessalonians we have turned from idols to serve the living and true God.

“And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it.” God then delivered those rebellious cities into the hand of Israel to be smitten. If they resisted they were to be subjected to all the horrors of a siege, for mercy refused brings judgment.

When Jonah went through the city of Nineveh crying, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” the city surrendered. From the king upon the throne to the beggar in the dust, they repented, and clothed themselves in sackcloth. They judged themselves, they surrendered to God, and God spared them. Jonah was disappointed because he wanted God to make war upon these enemies of the people of God, but when they surrendered they found that the Lord was gracious to them. Why do you not surrender now? If you do so, you will be forgiven.

Mac Ian MacDonald of Glencoe no doubt meant to submit to the throne, when in 1691 King William the Third decreed that the chiefs of the Highland clans must by December 31st take the oath of allegiance or suffer the consequences. Mac Ian intended to surrender; but he said, “I will be the last to go.” The other chiefs had gone to Inverness weeks before and all had taken the oath, but Mac Ian started out only a few days before the end of the month. A storm came on and delayed him, and after struggling through the snow, he arrived three days later than the time

fixed. He was too late. The royal army invaded Glencoe, and one morning that valley, so peaceful the night before, was drenched with blood. The surrender came too late. You intend to be saved, but do you know that Hell will be filled with those who meant to be saved? They intended to be saved but put it off. Just as the royal army was sent to Glencoe to punish those who did not surrender in time, so the Lord Jesus is coming with the armies of Heaven, and judgment will be meted out to all who refuse to submit to His offer of peace. Then surrender! Surrender now.

“THE CITIES OF REFUGE”

(Joshua 20; Num. 35: 6-34)

THE wonderful picture which we have in chapter 20 of Joshua gives us God's provision for the manslayer. God, in His grace, placed within reach of the manslayer a city of refuge to which he could flee from the avenger of blood. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to this when he says, "To us who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." Three cities were placed on either side of the Jordan, that they might be available to the manslayer in the hour of his extreme need. These were the God-appointed shelters, and in those cities alone refuge could be found from the avenger of blood. As you hear of God's grace in providing a shelter for the manslayer, may your heart be touched by such grace, for the same God, in His grace, has provided a shelter for you, to which *you* can flee in your need.

Here are two men who have settled to go wood-cutting together; they are friends, and they walk together to the place where they are to work. Each has an axe in his hand, and when they reach the place they start to fell the timber. As they are thus busy, one of them is astounded when his

axe-head flies from its handle and strikes his companion on the head, and he falls to the ground. He hurries to his side, and does the best he can to stop the flow of blood and save his friend's life, but all his efforts are in vain, and as he holds him in his arms, the injured man expires. He is so stunned by this unfortunate occurrence that he does not know what to do. It has been done unwittingly in ignorance. He did not expect this accident and its fatal consequences. What can he do under the circumstances? Whither can he flee for safety from the hand of the avenger of blood, who will track him as soon as he hears of this? There is only one place to which he can turn, one place of safety where he will receive a hearty welcome and be beyond reach of the avenger. So he turns towards the city of refuge. He must act quickly, for the avenger of blood will soon be on his track and cut him down if he can overtake him before he reaches the city. He puts the body down and flees for the place of safety. He has only one thought before him; to reach the city before the avenger reaches him. There are finger-posts at every cross-road, bearing the word "REFUGE" and pointing towards the city. The road is clear, and he is making progress. He is some distance from the city when he looks back to find that the avenger of blood is in pursuit. Soon he will be upon him, for the pursuer is fleet of foot. His hands are hanging down and his knees are becoming feeble. With what remaining

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strength he has, he pulls himself together and puts forth the most strenuous effort to reach the city. There it is before him, with its ever-open gate; the priest stands there with open arms to receive him and welcome him. The avenger gains on him at every step, and it looks as if he might be cut down before he reaches it. Just as the avenger puts forth his hand to seize him, he falls into the arms of the priest. He is now in the city, welcomed and sheltered by the priest himself.

Now for the application. This is a beautiful picture of the Gospel. The one who was guilty of manslaughter sets forth those who put the Lord Jesus to death, especially the Jews, for God did not come out in judgment to them at once, but dealt with them as those guilty of manslaughter. I would draw your attention to the manner of His death. It says, "If he be put to death by an instrument of iron or an instrument of wood." Did they not take those iron nails and drive them through His hands and His feet? And they took an instrument of wood, the cross, and nailed Him to it. God in His grace treats them as those who had done it in ignorance. The Lord on the cross prayed for them, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Peter later addressed them as those guilty of manslaughter, and pointed to the Lord in resurrection as the City of Refuge. "Ye killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. And now, brethren,

I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:15-17). The princes of this world did not know the wisdom of God, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8). Paul also says, "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13). It was not only the Jews who put Christ to death, the whole world is held guilty of this terrible crime, in which the Gentiles combined with the Jews, for the writing over the cross was in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. There is a City of Refuge for all today, in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel was first preached to those who had put Him to death, they had the first offer, but the apostles were commissioned to preach the Gospel to *all nations*, beginning at Jersualem.

The thought of the city of refuge for the man-slayer originated with God. It was God's provision for that man's need. The Gospel is called the Gospel of God, for it came from Him. If you want to trace the Gospel to its source, you must get right back to the heart of God. Both the love and its provision came from the same heart and for the deep need of men. Buddhism came from a Hindu sage; Mohammedanism came from Mohammed; the Gospel comes not from man, but from God, and it is the means of saving men. In these cities you have God's wonderful love, wonderful grace, wonderful provision.

They were not built in difficult or remote places.

Notice the mountains in connection with these cities. God would not place them in obscure places, but in positions convenient to be reached. The death of Christ took place on Mount Calvary, in order to provide a shelter for you. He is exalted in Mount Zion, which is within the reach of all. As the cities of refuge were placed within reach, and in conspicuous places so that they might be easily seen at a distance, so God's refuge is near you. You do not need to say, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" for, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." Christ is near the sinner and available to him.

What was it that drove this man to the city? It was his deep need of a place of shelter and security. Your deep need ought to drive you to Christ. Have you felt your great need of a Saviour? What was it that drove the prodigal to the father's house? It was his great need; he was perishing from hunger. What was it that brought the woman with the issue of blood to the Lord? She had tried many physicians and was no better, but grew worse. Her money was gone also. She must have healing, or death would cut her down, so she hears and comes. If you feel your need now you may come just as you are.

The cities were open to all—for the stranger as well as the children of Israel. The Gospel is not for any particular class; it is for all men; for God will have all men to be saved. Jew and Gentile are alike here; it is, "Whosoever shall call on

the name of the Lord shall be saved." The Gospel was to be preached to every creature under Heaven. The Lord Jesus has never turned any one away. He says, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Roads to the cities of refuge were made, and kept in good repair. "Thou shalt prepare the way." The road had to be made. May we not apply this to the Gospel? The way has been made. The way was made by the death of Christ, and we must come by the way. If there were rivers, they would be bridged; stumbling-blocks would be removed to make the road clear for the man in his flight for life. So too God from His side has cleared all difficulties that stood in the way of salvation. He bridged the sin gulf, solved every difficulty, removed every barrier, so that salvation might be brought within your reach. At every cross-roads were finger-posts with the word "REFUGE" on them. Reader, you may have come to the cross-roads. Which way are you going to turn? As the finger-posts pointed to the city, so would we seek to point you to Christ.

Let me remind you that the man did not build the city—God had it placed there for him. He had not to make the road—it was made for him. He had not to build a single bridge—all was done for him. The only thing he had to do was to flee for safety. What would you have thought if he had folded his arms after his companion was slain and had said, "If I am to be saved, I shall

be saved, and I cannot change the matter?" God did not take him and place him in the city; but God did make provision for the man in providing the city to which he could flee for safety. So many say, "I will be saved if I am one of the elect," and they do not take advantage of the provision God has made for them in providing a shelter for them. Lot was told to escape for his life, and so are you. You are not told to pray or to read your Bible or to attend church, but to *flee to Christ*. This man dropped all and fled. We want you to drop everything and flee to the City of Refuge. We urge you to flee, flee to Him, and lay hold of the hope set before you, "which hope we have as an anchor for the soul." Flee from the wrath to come! This man did not loiter; there was danger and death in delay. It would have been madness for him to linger. It is worse than madness for you to linger, for death is on your track and you may be cut down.

The gate of the city was always open; it was not closed. It was always ready for the manslayer. The door of mercy is open for you, sinner, not merely ajar, but wide open. Today it is open for you, day or night you may come. But some day the door will close, and then you will knock and not be heard. Why not come now while it is wide open?

There was a hearty welcome to all who came in need for it, for the priest was always ready, and the Lord Jesus is always ready to welcome all

who turn to Him. There is a welcome too if you come, and no one has ever been turned away.

The manslayer makes a full confession of his case in the ears of the elders of the city. When you come, you make your confession in the ears of the God against whom you have sinned. Hear the confession of David: "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." The Prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee." Will you too make a whole-hearted confession? If you do, God will forgive you.

In the city, and confession made, the man was admitted to its privileges, so you will be admitted to all the privileges which belong to the family of God. As soon as the prodigal confessed, he was brought into all the privileges of the house and family.

Once inside, the manslayer was perfectly safe. No one could touch him. The avenger could not touch him now. That charge which was against him could not now be pressed. So those who are in Christ are safe, no one can touch them. No one can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This man, when inside, was as safe and secure as God could make him; he was not safe until he was in the city. How could he feel safe and secure before he was there? He would feel happy when he was secure, but not till then. Some want to put feelings first,

and faith afterwards. This man's feelings came after he was in the city, and not until then. Feelings are unreliable, they are deceiving; but you can trust the sure Word of God. Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus: "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" (John 5:24).

The manslayer was in the city until he stood before the congregation for judgment. We read concerning the one who is in Christ, that "there is no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus." The Christian shall not come into judgment; he does not dread the judgment-day; it is past for him.

The death of the high priest set him at liberty. The Lord Jesus is our High Priest; He has died for us and we are now in perfect liberty. He now lives in the power of an endless life, and our life is bound up with His. The high priest was the representative of the people in things pertaining to life or death and, as head, he was responsible for the man who had taken refuge. We have fled for refuge, and been received and welcomed by the Lord Jesus. Our Priest can never die, for He now lives in the power of an endless life, He lives to intercede for His own.

The names of the cities are very interesting, and set before us some of the glories of the Lord Jesus as the City of Refuge. "Kedesh" means

holy—the Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled (Heb. 7: 26). “Shechem” means *shoulder*—the Good Shepherd puts the sheep upon His shoulders and the government shall be upon His shoulder in a coming day. “Hebron” means *fellowship*—this would speak of the fellowship we have been brought into. “Bezer” means *fortress*—He is our fortress and exceeding High Tower. “Ramoth” means *high*—He has the highest position in glory, and we are raised in Him. “Golan” means *joy*—and we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

No other refuge would avail but that which God had appointed. God thus points out that Christ is the only City of Refuge.

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”

Some are making lies their refuge, but all the refuges which men have built will be swept away. Again we must say, Christ is the only City of Refuge.

Abner died like a fool because he was beside Hebron, a city of refuge. If he had taken advantage of that city, he would have been saved. His hands were not bound nor his feet in fetters; he could have fled, but did not do so, and was slain. Some here may be wise in worldly matters, and foolish when it comes to their soul's welfare. Be wise for thyself now.

DAVID'S THREE LAMENTS

(2 Sam. 1: 17-26; 3: 31-39; 18: 20-33)

IN David's three laments we listen to him as he weeps over Jonathan, his lover and friend; over Abner, the great and mighty warrior; and as he mourns over his wilful, stubborn, and rebellious son, Absalom.

It is always touching when we see a strong man man weep, but when it is a king who is in tears, and that one the King of Israel, it stirs one indeed. First of all, David weeps over Jonathan, who lost the kingdom; he then weeps over Abner, because Abner lost his life; and then he weeps over Absalom, because Absalom lost his soul.

I like to look at Jonathan, David's lover and friend, because he is such a beautiful character. In David's lament over him we read, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." David never forgot the love of Jonathan to him. Jonathan had watched David go into the valley of Elah and bring down that mighty giant Goliath, who had held the people of God in bondage. He saw him carrying Goliath's head up to the city, and his heart was filled with joy, and when David had made an end of speaking to Saul, "Jonathan's soul was knit with the soul of David, for he loved him as his own soul." He was so delighted at David's wonderful victory that he stripped himself of his princely garments, his sword, his bow,

his girdle, and he laid all at David's feet. But not only did Jonathan thus strip himself of his royal array, he delighted much in David and spoke well of David. Only one thing was lacking in his devotion, he still continued with the house of Saul and he never broke definitely with that house. He never shared in David's rejection, and when David was crowned at Jerusalem Jonathan was not with him, for he had been slain on Mount Gilboa. As he never shared in David's rejection, he never shared in David's glory. He missed the kingdom because he fell short of the mark of absolute loyalty to David. He loved David, he was attached to him, but that was as far as his love would go.

That is like many Christians today. They are not prepared to take their place with the Lord outside the camp; they are not prepared to share with Christ in His rejection; and the eternal result will be that they will not be distinguished when Christ reigns in His glory, for we read, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."

The great soldier Abner, over whom David made his second lament, was a most remarkable man. He was one concerning whom David could say, "He was a great man." But while he was a great man, a mighty leader, and a prince, yet he died like a fool. Many we know today are like Abner, clever, and shrewd, level-headed men. You could not get ahead of them in any kind of busi-

ness. They are respected by all. They are rated as mighty men, great men, yet when it comes to the question of their soul's salvation, they are nothing but downright fools. They are wise regarding the affairs of this earth, but as to spiritual and heavenly and eternal things, they are supremely unwise, and if so in their latter end, they will die like Abner—they will die “as a fool dieth.”

Abner was one of those who saw David accomplish his victory over Goliath. He was present when David laid that mighty giant low, and he watched David go right up into the city with the head of the giant. He was the one who introduced David to Saul, for when Saul said, “Whose son is this?” Abner was the one who brought him before the king. But he never took sides with David; he went on with the doomed house of Saul all the rest of his life. How many are like that today! They know the truth of the Gospel—the glorious victory which Christ has accomplished; they could speak intelligently concerning His death and tell you many of the wonderful things contained in the Gospel; yet they never separate their connection with the doomed house of Adam, they never leave the ranks of the enemy, they never take their stand with Christ, with the winning side. Which side are you on? Have you severed your connection with the enemy? Have you taken your stand with the Lord Jesus Christ in the day of His rejection? The wonderful sol-

dier, Abner, could introduce David to Saul and yet he never took his stand with David himself. It reminds me of a woman who came to see Dr. Wolston one day. She was soliciting a subscription in order to send the Gospel to the heathen. "This is a very good work you are engaged in, madam, sending the Gospel to the heathen," said Dr. Wolston. "Oh, yes," said she, "I am very much interested in the heathen." "Have you accepted the Gospel yourself?" asked the Doctor; "Do you know Christ as your own Saviour? Have you taken your place as a lost guilty sinner before Him?" Ah, she knew nothing about Christ as her Saviour, she had never taken her stand with Him, and yet she was busy trying to introduce Him to the heathen. "You remind me of Noah's carpenters," said Dr. Wolston. "How is that?" asked the lady. "They were those who helped Noah to build the Ark, yet they never entered in themselves." There are many like that today. They are interested in Christian work, interested in doing good, yet they have never been born again. They know not Christ as their own personal Saviour. They have never taken their stand with Him. Don't you see that he who is not for David is against David? And Abner never took his stand with David, he stayed with the enemy. What about you, dear friend? If you have never taken your stand with Christ, then you are against Him; for "He that is not with Me is against Me." Mark you, there is no neutral

ground when it comes to Divine things. There is no such place as "No man's land," where you can stand and say, "I am neutral." If you are not for Him you are against Him, and if you are against Him you are lost. If you do not belong to God, you belong to the ranks of the enemy. You are still outside, on your way to a lost eternity, and if you remain on the outside until you die, you will be outside forever.

When Saul was asleep in the wilderness camp (1 Sam. 26), Abner was entrusted with the life of Saul; he was there to protect Saul. But David found Saul asleep and could easily have taken his life. He spared Saul and then awoke Abner with the cry, "The thing that thou hast done is not good; thou art worthy of death." Abner had failed in his charge, he had not obeyed the king's command, and therefore he was worthy of death. And we can say exactly the same thing to you, sinner, for you have failed in your charge—you are worthy of death. The sentence of death has been passed upon you. The law which God gave man told him of his duty both to God and to his fellow-man, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and strength and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." You, like others, have failed in this, and you are under the sentence of death. "The thing that thou hast done is not good." You are a sinner, lost, and under sentence of the judgment of God. "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" yea, this judgment will bring you

into the second death, the lake of fire, if you do not repent and believe the Gospel.

Again, after David spared Saul in the cave (1 Sam. 24), Abner heard the loving words of David as he spoke to Saul, and he saw Saul break down; he saw and heard Saul weep and confess, "Thou art more righteous than I. . . . I know well that thou shalt surely be king." Yet although Abner heard David's loving words to Saul and Saul's confession and his acknowledgment that David was the rightful king, nevertheless he still remained in the ranks of David's enemy; he would not break with Saul. And you have heard the loving words of the Gospel time and time again; you have listened to the story of Jesus told out in all its simplicity and tenderness and love; you have seen others acclaim Jesus Christ as their Lord; and yet you have continued in the ranks of the enemy; you are still identified with Satan; you are still against Christ. In spite of all that you know of God's truth, you are still on the losing side, on the road to Hell. Abner knew what was right; he had witnessed David's glorious victory, he had heard Saul's confession of David as king, he was one who had convictions, but he did not have the courage of his convictions. He failed to take his stand with David. He never said like Amasai, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse." And you know full well what is the right thing to do, yet you will not break with the ranks of the enemies of Christ; you will

not say, "Jesus, I am Thine, and on Thy side, Thou Son of God." When Christ was presented to the angry mob they said, "Not this man, but Barabbas." They knew Barabbas was a murderer, yet they chose a murderer and rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. And when Christ is presented to you in the Gospel, you reject Him, and remain upon the losing side.

David could have cut both Saul and Abner down because they were in his hands, but he spared their lives. Why? Because he did not will their death. He was favorable toward them. God could cut you down in your sin but He allows you to live. Why? Because "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It was not in David's heart to destroy Abner, and God allows you to live, which proves to you that the Lord Jesus Christ does not will your death. He gave Himself for your sins. He desires your salvation. He has spared you in His mercy until now, you have heard the story of grace that God is long-suffering, that Christ does not will your death, and that He is for you and not against you. Sinner, will you not see the wonderful grace of God and the long-suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you not bow to Him and own Jesus Christ as Lord? Say to Him,

"Jesus, I will trust Thee,
Trust Thee with my soul;
Guilty, lost and helpless,
Thou canst make me whole."

When the time came for making David king, Abner cast in his lot with Ishbosheth. "Ishbosheth" means *man of shame*, and it was to Abner's shame to be connected with him. Although Abner knew that David was the victor who had slain the giant, yet he connected himself with the man of shame. You know Christ has accomplished your salvation by conquering the mighty giant, Satan, and yet you are still connected with that which will end in shame. The Lord says, "He that believeth shall never be ashamed." For he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ is joined to Him and to His glory forever.

We learn another thing about Abner; he once said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and play before us," but that day's sport ended in death. Twelve of Joab's men and twelve of Abner's men ended their play that day in death. And there are young men whose life is horizoned by sport, they can think of nothing else; the latest results of sporting events are to them of greater importance than the question of their soul's welfare. There came a time when Ishbosheth made an accusation against Abner, and the charge he brought hurt Abner to the quick, and he determined as a result to leave Ishbosheth and his ill-starred cause and enlist in the ranks of David. He went and had an interview with David, and told him he was willing to come over to his side. David made him a wonderful offer; he would make him commander-in-chief of his army. But

between the time of David's offer and the receiving of that offer Abner was cut down, for the wily Joab was on his track. Joab perceived that David was going to promote Abner, and he was determined that Abner should never receive the promotion. And so it came to pass, for Abner turned aside to listen to the man who was bent on his destruction, and that turning aside proved fatal. My dear unsaved friend, God has offered you salvation. You have never taken it as yet. You may have decided to accept God's offer, but there is one bent on your destruction who wishes to take you aside and speak quietly with you. It is Satan, who is bent on your destruction; and to give ear to his voice instead of the voice of God is fatal. Joab came out in his true character then, for when Abner turned aside, Joab took a sword and smiting him under his fifth rib, he brought him down to death. The one you think is for you, asks you to turn aside, to listen to his voice, but he would fain bring you down to destruction, even to the damnation of hell. Do not give ear to the enemy of your soul, but listen to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for you. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

It was a most remarkable thing that Abner was slain just outside of Hebron, the city of refuge, for he had been guilty of manslaughter; he shed the blood of Asahel, Joab's brother, but if, instead of turning aside to listen to Joab, he had fled into the city of refuge, Joab could not

have touched him. Joab sent the messengers after Abner, and Abner returned to Hebron, but at the very gate of the city of refuge Joab finds him and slays him. Oh, sinner, "Thou art not far from the kingdom," but though "not far" you are not within. You may be very near, and yet, if outside, you are far away as regards the question of your soul's salvation. Sinner, you are close to the City of Refuge—Christ Himself. He is the One who is nearest to you, and He has come so close because He is anxious that you should be saved. Yet close though you are to salvation, you may miss it, and, like Abner, die as a fool dieth. David's lament said: "Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound nor thy feet put into fetters." Yet he was slain beside the city of refuge; his hands were free, his feet not fettered, he could have fled inside, but he delayed; he remained outside and was slain. Sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only City of Refuge for your soul. He is near you now. Your hands and your feet are perfectly free; you can lay hold on eternal life. You can flee to Him, and salvation is yours, if you will only enter into the City of Refuge.

When the Lord Jesus Christ suffered for sin upon the cross of Calvary, His hands and His feet were nailed, His hands were bound and His feet were fettered, but He was there voluntarily giving His life for sinners. Two malefactors were nailed to the crosses beside Him. One knew that

the Lord Jesus was the City of Refuge and he turned to Him. That sinner's hands and feet were bound, but his mouth and his heart were free, and he believed in his heart and with his mouth he made confession. He said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And he was saved while hanging on that cross, he was within the CITY OF REFUGE. But the other robber, just as near as his fellow, refused to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He reviled Him, he would not turn to Him, but he listened to the enemy and he was lost, LOST, eternally lost.

Now I want to draw your attention to Absalom. I think he was the most highly privileged young man of Old Testament times. David, the king, was his father, and David was a man after God's own heart. This young man was the son of a godly father. His father prayed for him, because he loved him, loved him so much that he would have died to save his soul from Hell. Outwardly, Absalom was the most beautiful young man in the land. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him, and when he polled his hair at every year's end it weighed two hundred shekels after the king's weight. A most beautiful and highly favored young man—that was as he was viewed by man. But in God's sight he was nothing but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. He would not listen to his godly father's voice; he was a stubborn and rebellious son. His heart was deceitful above all things and

desperately wicked. And—most solemn thing of all—he would not own David as king; he grasped for the throne for himself, and he stretched forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. And you, my reader, may be just as highly privileged; you may have a godly father, a godly mother, and they pray for you. They set you a right example. They love you as David loved Absalom, and would die to save your soul from Hell. O much-prayed-for reader, O sinner with all those privileges, you are rushing right on to destruction! You are stretching forth your hands against the Lord's Anointed One—you refuse to own Christ as Lord.

There are in Scripture three men who hung upon trees; Ahithophel, who counselled Absalom when he stretched forth his hand against David—he went and hanged himself on a tree; Judas Iscariot, who sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver—he went out and hanged himself on a tree. Here is the third man, Absalom, the privileged young man, the beautiful young man—prayed for and loved by his father—here he is hanging on a tree. “Cursed is everyone who hangeth on a tree.” He is hanging by his head; his hair which was his pride was the means of his death. You see what marked him was that he was stubborn and rebellious, stiff-necked and self-willed. Christian parents, Christian prayers, will never save you. Knowing the way of salvation will never save you. Oh, how intensely solemn it is that

there are some who read this, children of godly parents, who may be lost, and LOST forever!

Absalom thought Joab was his friend, just as Abner thought Joab to be a friend, but Joab enticed Abner to his doom, and when Absalom was hanging on a tree, Joab, his supposed friend, comes with three darts and drives them into his heart. He comes out in his true character then. O sinner, Satan, who lures you to your doom, is bent on your death and destruction! When he has you in his grasp he will come out in his true colors, and hurl his darts at you, and let you see the great mistake you have made, but then it will be too late, for if you listen to his voice instead of the voice of Jesus you will be doomed and damned eternally.

Another thing about Absalom—in his lifetime he built a great monument for himself; he was bent on self-exaltation. But the man who exalteth himself shall be abased, and the man who humbles himself shall be exalted. You want to build a name for yourself, young man; you want perhaps a monument to your name, and you may rear it up for yourself, but your soul may be lost in Hell for all eternity. Absalom's pillar did not adorn his grave, for when his body was taken down from the tree it was cast into a pit. But God's Word to you now is, "Deliver him from going down to the pit—I HAVE FOUND A RANSOM." Right on the brink of destruction, rushing on as quick as time can carry you, you are

going downward, but God says: "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." God will be favorable toward you if you will but turn to Him.

When the news of victory comes to David the one thing that concerns him is, "Is the young man safe?" and now the burning question in *your* parents' hearts is this, "Is the young man safe?" "Is the young woman safe?" Sinner, make sure that your soul is saved! If you are not in Christ you are outside, and outside of Christ you are exposed to the judgment of God. Is your soul saved, young man? Is your soul saved, young woman? We want to see you saved now. "Is the young man safe?" Absalom's death filled his father's heart with sadness, and you will fill your father's and your mother's heart with sadness if you die unsaved, but now you can fill Heaven with gladness if you will turn to Christ, for, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

When David hears of Absalom's death, he weeps. When David heard about the death of his little child, he immediately arose from the ground and anointed himself and ate food, but when he hears of Absalom's death he weeps and says, "O Absalom! O my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Why was he comforted when he heard of the babe's death? Because he could say of the child, "It is well with the child. He cannot re-

turn to me but I shall go to him." He knew that the child's soul was safe. When Absalom was slain, why did he mourn? Because he knew his soul was lost and doomed for all eternity.

God loves you, sinner. He loved you so much He sent His Son to die in order that you might be saved from Hell and be fit for Heaven. You can be saved by putting your trust in Christ, accepting Him as your Saviour. The all-important question is, "Is the young man safe?"

I would like to direct your mind to another scene of death upon a tree. Not here a wilful, stubborn, rebellious son, but the well-beloved, holy Son of God at Calvary. On that tree hangs the Lord Jesus Christ who took the place of the rebellious sons of Adam's race. He offered Himself up for sinners. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Taking the guilty sinner's place, He died in our stead. He came under the curse in order that you might be saved, in order that you might be delivered from Hell. Oh, believe in Him, receive Him, trust Him, submit to Him, bow to His authority, and you will be saved for time and for eternity. May it be so for His Name's sake.

NABAL AND ABIGAIL

(1 Samuel 25)

THE story of Nabal and Abigail has a Gospel application, presenting a picture of the refusal of God's message and of its acceptance.

Three persons are brought before us here: (1) David, God's anointed king, the deliverer and saviour of his people; (2) Nabal, a rich farmer, the meaning of whose name is "Fool," a man who lived for himself and had no heart for God's king, for he refused to acknowledge God's anointed and insulted David's messengers; and (3) Abigail, Nabal's wife, the one who recognized David as king, and gave him his request, and bowed to his lordship, even when her husband rejected him.

David was God's anointed king, whom God had provided for His people. He it was who had met and defeated the enemy of Israel, and, through slaying Goliath of Gath, had wrought a mighty deliverance for them. True, he was not crowned at once by the people as their king, and as long as Saul reigned David was in rejection. In all this David is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Anointed, for it was He who obtained the great victory over our enemy, the Devil, at the cross of Calvary, and, while very few comparatively have crowned Him yet, so that He is still today the re-

jected One, nevertheless "the crowning day is coming by-and-by."

In Israel at that time there were two kings presented before the people: Saul, man's choice, and David, God's chosen one. Saul had nearly the whole nation with him, and David had only a few hundred who recognized him and were loyal to him as the true king. This is a picture of conditions today, for there are two kings and two kingdoms upon the earth at this moment, and all men belong to one or the other. Satan, the prince of this world, has his kingdom here today, and multitudes are in that kingdom of darkness; and the Lord Jesus Christ has His kingdom here, the kingdom of light, even though His followers are few in comparison with Satan's. The Lord Jesus, as God's King, is enthroned in Heaven. He came from Heaven, and is called the Son of the Highest, and He is now seated far above all heavens. But in Revelation (chapter 9) we read that Satan is the king of the bottomless pit, with all the forces of evil under him. The source of his power, and the seat of his influence, are infernal, and out of that awful abyss will yet come smoke which will obscure the sun and the air. Is it any wonder that his kingdom is called the kingdom of darkness?

Now, as in the scripture we have read, those in Israel were either under David or under Saul, for they could not be neutral, so today every soul on earth is under the power and dominion of Christ

or Satan. Neutrality is impossible; you are either under Christ or under Satan; one of these two kings is your lord and master.

Let me direct your attention to this rich farmer, Nabal. He was of the house of Caleb, who was a man of *faith*, and wholly followed the Lord, but Nabal, his descendant, was a man of *sight* and followed the dictates of his own wicked heart. While he had a link with Caleb and thus belonged to a highly privileged family, he himself was an ungodly and unreasonable man who had no faith. And you may have had a godly father and mother and yet be in the outside place and, like Nabal, exposed to judgment.

Nabal lived in Mount Carmel, which means "a fruitful place." His ground brought forth plentifully, and he was wealthy; but though he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, he had nothing for David. He lived in these things and moved in these things, and could not see above or beyond these things. He never considered that all these mercies came from God: for he speaks of them as, "My sheep, my bread, my water, my flesh, my shearers." He never lifted his eyes above his great possessions to give thanks to God. The name Nabal means "Fool," and the man who acts thus is a fool.

I see a striking parallel between Nabal and the man of Luke, chapter twelve, whom we call "the rich fool." He also was a wealthy and prosperous farmer; his fields yielded wonderful crops. God

gave him such good harvests that he did not know where to bestow all his goods; yet he never returned thanks to God for His goodness in giving him rain and sunshine and a plentiful harvest. He too speaks of, "My barns, my goods, my fruits, my soul," but after he had said to his soul, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry," that very night God spoke to him, when all was quiet, and said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." He was Nabal the second. What if God should speak to you, saying, "Thou Nabal the third, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?"

While Nabal was living securely in his possessions, and having a time of revelry at the season of sheep-shearing, ten young men were sent to him by David, the rightful king, with a message and a request for recognition, "Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand." As God's anointed king, he had a right to recognition by Nabal. Had he not delivered him from the hand of Goliath, and thus proved himself to be Israel's saviour? Moreover, had he not been very good to Nabal himself personally? Had he not been a wall unto him both by night and by day? David had many and great claims upon Nabal. Now the Lord Jesus has greater claims upon you. He is God's King, for God hath made Him both Lord and Christ; He has died for you and bought you, and yet you have never bowed to Him. These young men were sent by their lord and master,

King David, with a message of peace, and to tell Nabal what David had done for him. They come in David's name and by his authority, and to despise them was to despise him that sent them. Now we come to you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ with a message of peace, for the Gospel tells you that Christ made peace by the blood of His cross. If *you* refuse the message, you refuse Him who sent the messenger (Luke 10:16).

How did Nabal treat David's messengers? Although he was a man of great possessions, he had not great wisdom. There are many who are good business men, but in spiritual things they are fools. Just as Nabal's foolishness came to light in the manner with which he treated King David's messengers, so the way in which you treat the Gospel proves beyond question whether you are one of wisdom's children, or a child of folly. The Gospel searches a man's heart, and reveals his innermost thoughts. "What think ye of David?" was the test applied to Nabal, and to you it is, "What think ye of Christ?"

"Who is David?" is Nabal's insolent question as the message from the king is delivered. When God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, the question of Pharaoh was, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice? I know not the Lord." He boasted of his ignorance. Do you know the Lord? Or are you ignorant of His Lordship? Nabal had no heart for David. To Nabal, David

was a root out of the dry ground, with no beauty that he would desire him. And alas, how many today are blind to the beauties and glories of Christ! In the days of His flesh, they said, "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?" And to-day men acknowledge, "He was a good man," but they do not see Him as God's Anointed.

Nabal had "room for pleasure and room for business," but he was too much engrossed with his own affairs, too self-occupied, to have any time for David. He did not know it, but it was his day of opportunity. Had he owned David as his lord and king in the day of David's rejection, had he thrown in his lot with that exiled one, he would have shared in the kingdom glories when David ascended the throne. And this is your day of opportunity. Are you too busy, so much occupied with the things of the world, that you have no time for Christ? If you own Him as Lord you will this very day be brought into untold blessings, and share in the glories of His coming Kingdom.

For Nabal to act as he did, made him guilty of high treason. You know that high treason is the most heinous crime upon the calendar, and, by the universal law of civilized nations, punishable by death. During the Boer War in South Africa there were certain subjects of Queen Victoria who took up arms against the Queen and country. I knew some of those who did this, and they were men of noble character; but, when they were ar-

rested and tried for high treason, no question was raised as to their character; they were proved guilty of resisting Her Majesty's Government, and for this they were taken out and shot. That was the law. Nabal was guilty of high treason, and I am going to bring against every unsaved person here that same terrible charge. No matter what your character, you are guilty of this crime because you resist Christ and refuse to own God's Anointed as your Lord and King.

Then David said, "Gird on every man his sword." He pronounced judgment against this wicked fool who had refused the message of peace. David had called and Nabal had refused, David had stretched out his hand and Nabal regarded it not; and now David must execute judgment and bring down Nabal's folly upon his own head. And let me warn you the Judge standeth before your door. Your only safety is to have Him as Saviour when He is preached unto you. If you do not bow to Him as Saviour, you will bend to Him as Judge. Little did Nabal know, in the midst of his prosperity and pleasure how near he was to death and judgment, for David's men were fully armed and ready to carry out David's commands. And little do the unsaved of today know how near they are to the judgment, for, "When they shall say, Peace and safety! then sudden destruction shall come upon them."

But in Nabal's case the stroke of judgment was stayed by the intervention of Abigail. This

woman held it back. And do you know what it is that restrains the pouring out of God's wrath upon the ungodly today? It is the Holy Spirit in the Church. It is the presence of the Church that now holds back the judgment of God, for not a single drop of that judgment can fall until the Church is taken out of this scene; but as soon as she is removed and safely at home in the Father's house, then the overwhelming flood of God's righteous wrath will burst upon the rebellious world.

One of Nabal's servants tells Abigail about the visit of David's messengers, and how Nabal had railed upon them and rejected David's message of peace. She listens to the story of her husband's behavior, she realizes what a fool her husband has been to treat David's men in this way, for she was a woman of good understanding, one of wisdom's children and not a child of folly. She sees that David is not to be trifled with, that the matter demands her best and her immediate attention, and she makes haste and takes in her hand what David requested. She comes to David, she falls at his feet and craves his forgiveness. She gives David his true name of "lord." She believes in her heart that David is God's king and confesses him with her mouth. And while she sees that David is the true king, she speaks of Saul, the people's choice, as only "a man." She also speaks of David's blameless life, that no sin was found in him, and she speaks of David's coming glory, when God would give him the kingdom, and she

asks David to remember her when he comes into his kingdom.

Let me ask you, Are you giving this matter your best attention? Are you making haste to fall at the feet of Jesus and obtain His forgiveness? Alas, how many souls have been lost through lingering. You do not need, as Abigail did, to bring anything in your hand, but you must confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead.

Now I would like to show you how this works out in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus is the Revealer of the thoughts of men's hearts. You recall how He went into the house of Simon the Pharisee. Like Nabal with David, Simon could see no beauty in the Lord Jesus. He gave the Lord nothing—no water for His feet, no kiss, no ointment. When the woman came in he said in his heart, "If this Man were a prophet He would know what manner of woman this is that touches Him." But the woman supplies what Simon had kept back. She bows at His feet, acknowledging Him as Lord: she had tears and kisses for His feet and ointment for His head. And whilst the Lord exposes Simon by bringing forth the thoughts of his heart, He vindicates the woman, forgiving her sins, and guiding her feet into the way of peace.

Let me draw your attention to another occasion where the Lord revealed the thoughts of the

heart. On the cross of Calvary our Lord was crucified, rejected by His own, and nailed to that tree by wicked hands, hanging between two thieves. Over His head, written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, is the title, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Now as Nabal railed upon David in his time of need, so one of the malefactors railed upon our Lord, saying, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us," taunting Him in *His* hour of need. And just as Abigail came at the right moment, acknowledging David as lord, craving forgiveness, and asking him to remember her when he came into his kingdom, so does the other malefactor. He rebukes the railer, confesses his own sin, proclaiming the innocence of the Lord Jesus, acknowledges Him as Lord, and prays that He will remember him when He comes into His Kingdom. The dying thief was saved there and then. When all others forsook Him and fled, and the multitude railed upon Him, this malefactor saw in the crucified One God's King, who would yet have His kingdom.

There are two peculiar expressions that Abigail used in speaking to David to which I wish to draw your attention, namely, the "bundle of life" and the "sling." She says, "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God." When things are to be held together securely they are bound up in a bundle; and there are saved men and women today who are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord Jesus. He

is our life; His life is in us; we are one in life with Him. We are in His hand, and His hand is in the Father's hand, a double security for the believer in Jesus. But the Lord spoke of other bundles, of the tares being held together in bundles to be cast into the fire, bundled together for destruction. Let me ask you, Which bundle are you in?

Abigail also spoke of David's enemies: "The souls of thine enemies, them shall the Lord sling out, as out of the midst of a sling." As with his sling and stone David defeated Goliath of Gath, and all his enemies would meet with the same fate, so our Lord Jesus Christ by His death upon the cross defeated Satan, and in a coming day will hurl that enemy into the Lake of Fire, and all who have refused Christ will share the same fate. Would you not rather be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord Jesus, rather than be cast into outer darkness for ever and ever? Just as David blessed Abigail and bid her go in peace, so may you now be blessed by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ; your sins forgiven, you will enter the path of peace.

When Abigail returned to Nabal, she found him feasting like a king, merry and drunken. He had nothing for David, but he had plenty for self. Little did he know that, but for her intercession, he would have been by that time smitten with death. And how many are spending their lives like him, eating and drinking, and going in for

the pleasures of this life, judgment only being stayed through the intercession of the saints. Little did Nabal know in his revelry how soon his soul would be required of him. Like Belshazzar's famous feast in Babylon, the end of its revelry was death. And let me warn you, "The end of those things is death." At Belshazzar's feast his courtiers said, "O king, live for ever!" but God said, "Thou art found wanting," and that night his soul was required of him.

In the morning after the feast, Abigail told Nabal her story, a story of conversion, of grace and mercy, a story which should have melted his heart. But did it have that effect? No! "His heart died within him, and he became as stone." Job said, "God maketh my heart soft," but this man, like Pharaoh, hardened his heart, and God came in and hardened it for him. Beware, my friend, of that terrible condition called "judicial hardening," which comes upon those who harden their own hearts.

Ten days later God smote Nabal, and he died. He lived like a fool, and died like a fool. God cut him down as a cumberer of the ground. The rich farmer of Luke 12 thought he had many years before him, but God said, "Cut him down. Tonight this fool must die." And what knowest thou, O man, but God may say of you, "Cut him down, his day of grace is gone, he has put it off until too late; this night his soul shall be required of him?" "Cut him down," and "Where the tree fall-

eth, there it shall be." If it falls to the north, that means *judgment*; if to the south, that means *blessing*. Belshazzar, and Nabal, and the rich farmer, all fell to the north, and so must you if you die unsaved. The death of Nabal under the hand of God was just what we would expect. He sowed sin and folly and he reaped judgment. He died as he lived.

Abigail, however, sowed wisdom, and reaped peace and glory. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: the end of that man is peace." Observe how Abigail was finally rewarded. She became the bride of David. And those who are saved, who now own Christ as Lord, are yet to be His Bride in the glories of a coming day.

When Abigail went to become the bride of David, five damsels went with her. In the parable of the marriage in Matthew 25, five virgins who were wise and five who were foolish went forth to meet the Bridegroom. What distinguished the one company from the other? The foolish had no oil in their vessels, the wise had the oil. Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit, and, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Are you wise or foolish? Oh, be wise; get the oil; for without it you will be outside in the dark when the Bridegroom cometh.

DECISION FOR CHRIST

“Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you; now then do it” (2 Sam. 3: 17).

IT was a crucial moment in the history of Israel. Saul, the king of Israel, and three of his sons, had been slain on Mt. Gilboa in battle with the Philistines, and the kingdom of Israel by natural descent was now in the hands of Ishbosheth, another of Saul's sons. It looked as though Ishbosheth was about to carry the day. All Israel, except the tribe of Judah, were for Saul's son, but Judah stood for David and for God. Ishbosheth was not God's man; David was the man of God's choice, the man in whom all God's purposes for Israel centered. That which was established in Ishbosheth must necessarily crumble to the dust, for God's thoughts were connected with David, and the crown must assuredly eventually be placed upon his head; and now the moment has come for Israel to make their decision for David or for this son of Saul.

Let me draw your attention to what marked David. He was the eighth son of Jesse, of the royal house of Judah. He was the one anointed with the holy anointing oil in the midst of his brethren, thus marking him out as God's king. It was

he who came forth from his father's presence to meet Goliath of Gath. He was the only one in all Israel who could cope with the giant. He took five stones from the brook, and with one of them laid low the mighty enemy, and then cut off his head. By this David wrought a great deliverance for the children of Israel. He was their saviour. His name, David, means "Beloved," and he was noted for his beauty and worth. In all things he was marked as the man of God's choice. But whilst Israel should have given him his true and rightful place as their king, they clave to Ishbosheth and refused David.

And who was Ishbosheth? He was only an interloper. His name means "A man of shame," and it was a shame to be connected with such an one. His was an ill-starred cause that could only end in disaster. The "man of shame" died a shameful death, and all connected with him ended in shame. Why? Because he was not God's man; he was not the man of God's choice.

Now up to this time Abner had been the commander-in-chief of Israel's army. He had first served Saul, and now he was linked up with Ishbosheth, Saul's son, against David. He was identified with the wrong man, fighting for the wrong cause. But he sees this in time, and he turns from Ishbosheth and his ill-starred cause and goes over to the side of David, and his desire is henceforth to make David king over all Israel. He had decided for David himself, and now he

becomes an ambassador for his new master. He calls the elders of Israel together and says to them, "You have for a long time thought about making David your king; now then do it."

In a later day the nation of Israel had to make another and still more important choice. Two men were presented to that people, Barabbas and Christ, and they had to decide as to which they would have. They decided, but their decision was a wrong one; they said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." They refused Christ, the Man of God's purpose, and to their shame they chose Barabbas. They ought to have refused Barabbas, the one who was guilty of sedition and murder; they ought to have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, God's well-beloved Son, the One whom God sent into the world and whom God destined to the throne; but instead of doing so, they identified themselves with the wrong man and the wrong cause. That is exactly what their forefathers, the Israelites, were doing at this time. They had been identified with Ishbosheth, the wrong man; they had been refusing David his true and rightful place as king. But Abner makes the right choice; he decides for God's king; he comes over to the ranks of David; and now he urges the elders of Israel to do the same, for he realizes that the moment has come when the nation of Israel should make their decision.

And, my dear friend, this may be a critical moment in your history. The time has arrived

when you ought to make Christ your Saviour and Lord. As Abner said to the elders of Israel, "Now then do it," so we say to you. For a long time you have thought about this matter, you have given it due consideration, and now the crucial moment has come when you ought to make a decision, and we urge you to accept Christ now. As Abner left Ishbosheth, the man of shame, and came over to David's side, so we want you to make the right decision, to join the ranks of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Man of God's choice.

Leave the world, and all that is identified with it, which will only end in shame, and decide in favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall never be put to shame." All connected with Christ shall end in everlasting glory.

When the men of Benjamin came to David, they said, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse." They said, "We belong to you." They gave him his true and rightful place. But, unsaved one, you have never yet said to Christ that you have taken sides with Him. You have hitherto stood identified with that world which put Christ to death. You are still in the ranks of the enemy and away from Him. Just as Ishbosheth came in between the hearts of Israel and David, so the things of the world have been holding your heart and keeping you away from Christ. Oh, my dear young friend, let me press this point upon you. We sing sometimes :

130 *The Old, Old Story from the Old Testament*

“Room for business, room for pleasure,
But for Christ the Crucified,
Not a place that He can enter
In the heart for which He died.”

You have plenty of time for business, plenty of time for pleasure, but you have never yet decided for Christ. You have never given Him His true and rightful place. You have gone on with the things of time and sense, and they have occupied your heart and mind to the exclusion of the blessed Christ of God. You have made no room in your heart for Him, and thus you have refused Him. Young man, up to this moment you have allowed other things to come in between your heart and Christ, and these have kept the Lord Jesus out. You have no room for Him. He is outside. But the moment has come when you must make a decision, either for Him or against Him. What is it that has held you back so long? Is it business, or pleasure, or companions, or the fear of man? These perhaps are some of the things that have been holding your affections, and you allow them to keep you from deciding for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abner becomes an ambassador for David. He wanted to bring the hearts of the others over to David's side. So we come forth on Christ's behalf, for we also have changed our man. We were going on with the wrong man, but we have changed him for the Man Christ Jesus. We have come over to the side of Christ, and now, as am-

bassadors of Christ, we say to you, "You have for a long time thought about making Christ your Saviour and Lord—now then do it." Do it now. The crucial moment has come when you ought to decide for Him and give Him His true and rightful place. We would bring you right up to the point, and say, "The time has come for you to act; now then do it." Why? Because He is the Saviour. At His birth it was said of Him, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." He was the One who came from the Father's presence. He was the One who had the anointing of God. He was the One who came to deliver us from the hand of the enemy. He came here in order that you might know His salvation. You have been visited with the Gospel, and you have for a long time been thinking about making Christ your Saviour and Lord—now then do it!

Here is a young woman who has thought about this matter for many years. When she was at Sunday School she promised she would take Christ as her Saviour and Lord, but she put it off—she delayed her decision. She is again brought under the sound of the Gospel. God, once again, in His sovereign mercy and grace, has been speaking to her heart. Oh, my friend, you have for a long time been thinking about this matter; now the crucial moment has arrived. We ask you to take Christ as your Saviour. Put it off no longer, but do it now.

It may be that that time when you were sick you promised to take Christ as your Saviour and Lord; you said to Him that if He would raise you up and give you another opportunity, you would receive Him as yours. He raised you up, but you have never as yet settled the question, you have never decided. Now again you have the opportunity. Now then do it; do it now.

Perhaps you remember when that loved one died, you were touched, you were affected; you felt it very keenly. You thought, "If that had been myself, where would my soul be?" and you promised God that you would decide for Christ, but you have never done so. God in His wonderful grace has brought you here again and has given you another opportunity. What about your promise? You have long thought about it. He speaks to you once again. We bring you the message; we say to you: "Now then do it; do it now. Decide now."

Here is someone getting on in years. This question has engaged your attention for a long time. God in His long-suffering and patience has brought you once again under the sound of the Gospel; He has given you another occasion in which to decide the matter. This may be your last chance. This may be the last opportunity you will have. We press this point. You have thought long enough about making Christ your King. Now then *do it!*

I never read this verse but I remember the time

some years ago when I was holding meetings in the north of Scotland. God came in and gave His blessing and saved souls. A brother, a special friend of mine, stood at the door of the Gospel Hall one night, and he said to me, "One of our best skippers is attending the meetings, and he seems interested. You might speak to him. He is here tonight!" I asked him to point the man out to me, and promised to get in touch with him. While I was speaking on this verse I said, "You remember that night when you were out at sea and you encountered that great storm. You were far out on the deep, and you thought you never again would see land. As you stood in your danger and saw nothing but eternity ahead, you cried, 'O God, if you let me get out of this, if you save me this time, I will take Christ as my Saviour and Lord.' You promised God you would do it. In His grace He brought you through that storm, but you have never kept your word; and He has brought you in here and you have listened to the Gospel. You have long thought about making Christ your Lord, DO IT NOW."

After the meeting I went to that man and asked, "Are you saved?" He looked up into my face and said: "I thank God I can say tonight, 'Christ for me.' " "When did that take place?" I asked. He said, "Tonight, during the meeting." Then he told me his story. He said, "I was coming up from Yarmouth in my trawler, and when nearing home a terrible storm broke. We thought the

boat was going to pieces. I was standing at the wheel up to my waist in water, and saw a big sea about to break over us, 'Boys,' I shouted, 'She's going this time!' Just then I cried to God and said, 'O God, if you deliver me, if you save me, I will take Christ as my Saviour and Lord.' We weathered that storm and reached home in safety, and yet I never took Christ as my Saviour, but just here in the meeting while you were saying, 'Now then do it,' I did, and I'm saved." I have seen him since, and he is truly a bright specimen of the handiwork of God. And perhaps you also were once brought to the point of death and told God that if He brought you through the danger and saved your life you would turn to Christ and accept Him. You have never done so. You know the right thing to do. God has given you another opportunity; now then do it.

But Satan would persuade you that you will miss something if you take Christ. I tell you, you do not know what you are missing by staying away. What are you going on with? The world and sin?—its follies and false pleasures? These are going to end in shame. All that the Christian is identified with is going to end in bliss and glory, because he is identified with Christ.

You say, "What is there to do then?" This, only. Just as Israel listened to Abner, and brought forth the crown and placed it on David's head, giving him his true and rightful place, and making David king and lord of all, so should you do.

Give Christ the place that God has given Him. "God has made Him both Lord and Christ." Until now you have never made Him your Lord, you have never believed in Him; but now, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Those people left Ishbosheth and came over to David. They brought forth the crown and placed it on his head, crowned him lord of all. Do that now. Leave the ranks of sin and Satan, come over to the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, give Him His true place, His rightful place in your heart; believe that He died, was buried and raised again, and own Him as your Lord. Come now, just as you are, and say with Charlotte Elliott:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee.
O Lamb of God, I come."

Unsaved one, while you have the opportunity and while it is God's day of grace, while Christ is presented to you in the Gospel as Saviour and Lord, come clearly out for Him, and say that you will do it here and now.

Now see what David does with Abner. He feasts him. That was just like David, and that is just like Christ. Those who take Him as their Saviour and Lord are given something wonderful to enjoy—the great Gospel-feast that has been provided at infinite cost. They come into all the

blessings of the Gospel; they are feasted here and now. Some think that the Christian is nothing at all and has nothing at all. I tell you he has riches far greater than this poor world can give. You are spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not; but God's Gospel runs this way, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight in fatness." He gives wine and milk "without money," all that you need "without price," and He will give you all the joys of Heaven if you will only take Christ as your Saviour and Lord.

You can settle this matter now. The moment came in Israel's history when they had to settle the question, when they could not remain neutral, but had to make their choice and come out for David or against him; so you have come to the crucial moment. You must decide. You cannot remain neutral. You must either come out for the Lord Jesus Christ or decide against Him. Will you say, "Thine am I, Lord Jesus, and on Thy side, Thou Son of God?"

The great trouble is that people will not act decidedly and come out definitely for Christ. They seem impressed; they come so far, but they do not take the necessary last step. You may have heard of King Agrippa. Paul was a prisoner arraigned before the king, but though in chains Paul delivered a wonderful speech, and the word went right home to the heart of King Agrippa. When Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead

he was so deeply impressed that he said, "Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Almost persuaded? Persuaded to do what? To make Christ his Saviour and Lord. I doubt not that when Paul heard King Agrippa's words, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," he would say, "O King, make the decision. Why longer trifle and tamper with your soul? Now then do it."

Then you remember Felix, the Roman Governor before whom Paul reasoned of temperance, righteousness and judgment to come, with such power that Felix trembled under the preaching. He also came to the crucial moment of his life, but he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season (not a *more* convenient season, for he never had a more convenient season than that one) I will call for thee."

You will never have a more favorable opportunity than what is presented to you now.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at its flood, leads on"—
to eternal glory.

Felix said, "Go thy way for this time," but he never found a more convenient season.

You remember the case of Rebekah. She was called upon to make a decision. The servant had met her by the well, he had put the bracelet upon her hand and the jewel upon her forehead. He opened up his treasures and spoke of the glories of his master Isaac. He told her of his riches

and his honor, and tried to win her for his master. Having delivered his message he said, "Now, I must be going." What would her answer be? Her relatives plead, "Give her ten days at least," but his reply was, "I must go at once." They call Rebekah, and the question is put to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" What does she answer? She said, "I will go." Then and there she decided. She came out clearly for Isaac, and she left her father and mother to become a bride for Isaac, on the other side of the desert.

You remember that Ruth and Orpah both came right up to the borders of the Holy Land with Naomi. Naomi placed the whole situation before them. Ruth decided to go on. Orpah wept, and decided to go back to her land and her gods. She was affected, but decided to return; whereas Ruth was determined to go on with Naomi. "She was steadfastly minded to go." She made her choice there and then. She went to Bethlehem, and her decision turned into a wonderful blessing for her and hers.

We call upon you for your answer. You have for a long time thought about these matters—NOW act. Mark you, if you do not, if you will not make your decision for Christ, then God will do exactly as He says He will. He says: "He that believeth not shall be damned." If you do not decide *for* Christ, then you decide *against* Him, and, dying a Christ-rejecter, it will mean eternal shame for you.

A GREAT SIN AND GOD'S GREAT FORGIVENESS

(2 Samuel 12: 1-23)

IN this remarkable Scripture we have the record of David's sin, David's confession, David's repentance, and the great forgiveness which God extended to him. And I have read it, not so much to magnify David's sin, but in order that I might lay *your* sin upon your conscience; to show you in David's guilt a picture of your own sin, and also to point out that the way in which God dealt in grace with David is exactly the same way whereby He deals in grace and forgiveness with the sinner today. Oh, the marvelous grace of God that can come out in this wonderful way and cover such sin in man, for David was guilty of both adultery and murder, and yet, although nothing is more heinous in God's sight than this double iniquity, still God could find means whereby to pardon David's sin and cover his transgression. "Who is a God like unto Thee that pardoneth iniquity?" (Micah 7: 18).

First, I would point out that David's sin is very similar to the sin of Adam. God gave Adam everything that it was possible for Him to give. He made Adam head over the creation, and placed at his command everything that would minister

to his comfort, but the one thing He did not give him was permission to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. David, in like manner, was one who had been exceedingly privileged. God exalted him to the highest position in the land, to reign over Israel and Judah; He gave him all that Saul had possessed; and if that had been too little He would have given him more. But the one thing that David could not have was that thing which he was determined to get, and his downfall began with a look. He walked upon the housetop and he looked (the lust of the eye), and he took (the lust of the flesh). And so it was in Eden. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food (the lust of the flesh), and that it was pleasant to the eyes (the lust of the eye), and a tree to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life), she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her: and he did eat." And when Adam fell he brought down everything with him. Sin commenced with a look: Adam's sin, David's sin. Again it was when the sons of God *saw* that the daughters of men were fair that they *took* wives of all that they chose. It was when Lot *looked* upon the well-watered plains of Jordan near Sodom that he made the wrong choice. You recall also that, when Achan *saw* the gold and silver, and the goodly Babylonish garment, he coveted them and took them, with the result that he brought sin into the camp. Here we have the same thing. Al-

though God had exalted David as He exalted Adam to the highest possible position, David coveted that which he had not, that which God had forbidden, and which he ought not to have had, and he took it and fell. Herein we see the likeness between the awful evil of David's sin and the terrible transgression of the first man Adam, who when he fell brought down everything with him.

The next thing that David tried to do was to implicate Uriah, and make him appear to be responsible for that which was alone his own sin. And the first thing that Adam did, in answering God's question about his sin, was to seek to put the blame upon the woman, and indirectly upon God, for he said: "The woman whom *Thou gavest* to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." How quick we are at putting our guilt upon the shoulders of others! How very few are honest enough to come out into the light and take the blame themselves! How slow we are to own before God our evil, our sin, and stand self-judged and self-convicted before Him.

This sin of David began with that look on the housetop. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "That which is done in secret shall be proclaimed on the housetop." God told David, "Because thou hast done this thing secretly, I will deal with it in public." Sin will come to light. David thought no one would know about his crime; he thought he had covered it up so well that none would be the wiser. He forgot he had to deal with God,

and that no man can cover his sin from God. When Adam sinned, the first thing he thought of was a covering, for he realized that he was naked and exposed to the eye of God, and so the fig-leaves were taken and sewed together to cover his nakedness, but that was not sufficient, for he hid himself among the trees of the garden. God called him from his hiding-place and drove his sin home to him, and God called David from his hiding-place and drove his sin home upon him. You cannot cover sin. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

When Cain sinned, he tried to cover up his tracks in such a way that no one would know about it. But God knew it, and God brought his guilt to the light. "Where is thy brother Abel?" Oh, that was the last thing Cain wanted God to say; and that is the very thing God said, in order to bring the crime in conviction to the sinner's door. Joseph's brethren were guilty of a heinous sin. They also thought no one would know about it, because they covered up their tracks so well. You remember that they took Joseph's coat, dipped it in the blood of a kid, carried it to their father, and asked him, "Is this thy son's coat?" The father knew the coat well, and said, "An evil beast hath devoured him." But there came a day when these brethren stood before the one they thought they had gotten rid of—they stood before Joseph, who acted in such a way that they felt

their sin. He made them weep, and so drove home their iniquitous deed upon them that they cried out, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." You remember also Ananias and Sapphira who thought they could practise deception. When they saw others were selling their land and bringing the proceeds and laying them down at the apostles' feet, they too sold their land, but kept back part of the price, pretending that they had given all. When they were asked, "Did you sell it for so much?" "Yes," they said; "we sold it for so much," and in so answering they lied to the Holy Ghost. God knew their sin and brought it to the light, and Peter said to Ananias, "You have lied not to men, but to God."

Do not deceive yourself with the idea that you can deceive God. Do not be like Jeroboam's wife, who thought she could disguise herself and deceive a poor blind prophet. Imagine her disguising herself to deceive a blind man; but you see she was uneasy about the matter, she had a guilty conscience, because she was practising deception. When she came to the door of the prophet's house he cried out to her, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another?" She stood exposed, her disguise was useless; she was trying to appear as another, but she was revealed as Jeroboam's wife. Many today think they can deceive God; and they think that God has overlooked their sin. Do not let Satan deceive you on this point, as your sin is toward God and

God knows all about it. Yea, He has a record of your every transgression in His books, and He will surely deal with you about those sins. He has recorded them, and sooner or later He will call you to account for them.

David covered his sin, thinking that if he could forget it, God would forget it also, and he went on for exactly a year with that iniquity hidden. But if David forgets, God never forgets sin. A lady was once entertaining a little boy. She showed him beautiful pictures and told him interesting stories, and then she played some sweet music on the piano for him, and sang some hymns. She finally sang one with these words,

"I am thinking of my sin,
The wicked things I've done;
How very naughty I have been,
Although I am so young."

"Oh," said the boy, "don't sing that." "Why not?" said the lady. "Oh," he answered, "it is not nice to think about your sins." "Have you any sins?" she asked. "Plenty," he said. "What do you do with them?" she asked. "I try to forget them all," he replied. Yes; we all have plenty of sins, and we try to forget them; we try to blot them out of our memory. That is what most men and women are trying to do with their sins today. They have plenty, truly, and they are trying to forget them. But though you should succeed in forgetting your sin it is recorded before God, and

you will be called to account for every sin upon that record in His books. Mark this well: God will bring you into judgment for them.

God's eye was upon David. When the moment came that He would charge David's sin home to him, He sent Nathan, the prophet, to awaken his slumbering conscience and, in order that He might arouse him, He brought David's hidden sin to the light. And God's eye is upon you, sinner, and He would expose to you that hidden sin of yours. Oh, would to God I could lay your sin upon your conscience, and by God's Word bring it to the light.

Nathan brought out David's sin by means of a parable. That was the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to men when He was here, in order that He might reveal their sin to them. Do you remember His parable in Matthew 21? When the religious men of that day were gathered around Him, He told them of a certain king who planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. At the proper season the king sent his servants for the fruits of the vineyard, but they beat some and killed others. Finally he said, "I will send my son; it maybe they will reverence him." But him they cast out, saying, "This is the heir; let us kill him," and the Lord closed the narrative by saying, "The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Head of the corner." The Pharisees at once saw the meaning of the parable; that He had spoken it against them; that He was

charging home to them their treatment of Himself. They had first rejected God's servants, the prophets, and now they were planning the murder of His Son. He drove home to them their sin, their sin of rejection of God's Christ. And He would drive home your sin to you by using this parable. How do you stand before God?

Again, you remember how it is recorded in Luke 15 that the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him, but the Scribes and Pharisees murmured saying, "This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." There and then He spoke to them the parable about the sheep that was lost, by means of which He brought before them the lost condition of the sinner, and the fact that the Shepherd left the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness, and went after that one lost sheep until He found it. He told them this parable in order to bring before them God's truth that sinners are lost to the Shepherd as truly as the sheep that had wandered away.

And we would bring before you the story of David's sin for the same purpose, in order that we might charge home your sin upon you. As soon as David heard Nathan's story of the ewe-lamb, he passed the sentence of death upon himself (not that he knew what he was doing at the time); he condemned himself when he said, "He that hath done this thing shall die," for he was that man. When Judah heard of Tamar's sin, he said, "Burn her! Burn her!" He passed sentence

upon her, but as soon as she brought out his signet, bracelets, and staff, Judah himself was convicted as the sinner, for he exclaimed, "She hath been more righteous than I." The evidence of his guilt was before him, and thus his sin was brought home to his own door. Dear unconverted sinner, how often you have accused others, and passed sentence upon them; you have pointed your finger at others' sins and judged these sinners, but in so doing you bring yourself in guilty. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things." "Thou art the man." You stand convicted before a Holy God. Do you know you are under the sentence of death? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Thou art guilty and undone, and God says, "Thou shalt surely die."

At the crucial moment Nathan hurled the dart right at the conscience of this guilty king. He first brought before him by the parable the sin of which he had been guilty, and, turning back David's sentence upon himself he said, "Thou art the man!" Oh, I would fain bring your sin before you, dear friend. You have long, long been talking about others' sins. You have waxed eloquent when discussing other people and their misdeeds, but I want to tell you, "Thou art the man." You are the sinner, and the judgment of God is

upon you! Guilty before Him, you are condemned already. The only question is, Have you agreed with God in His judgment? Have you passed sentence upon yourself?

Years ago a well-known evangelist was preaching in Glasgow, Scotland, and a man pushed his way through the crowd with a piece of paper (it was a page torn from the Bible) in his hand. He said to the preacher, "Here, read that to the people! Read that to the people! It's from the Bible; it must be good for them. Read it to them; it is a part of the Word of God!" The servant of God took the paper, and glancing at it he saw what it was, and said, "No, I'll not read that to the people." (It was this chapter about David's sin.) Just then an old Scotch lady spoke up and said, "What's like the matter, Mr. Preacher? What's like the matter?" The preacher told her that the man wanted him to read about David's sin to the people, but he had refused to do so. She turned to the man and said: "Yes, that's right. We know all about David's sin already; but we don't know about this man's sin." Ah, that was it! He would like to hear another man's sin discussed, he was willing to condemn David, but he was not willing to condemn himself, and so he slunk away through the crowd.

Now, sinner, do not put the sin on to your neighbor. Do not think that this is a good word for the person sitting next to you, while all the time you are sitting there in your sin. While you

condemn others and say, "The man that has done this shall die," God's answer is, "Thou art the man!"

I think the first murderer arrested by the aid of wireless was Crippen. It was very difficult to track him. He and his companion, disguised, left the shores of England for the United States. The captain of the vessel, knowing of the unsolved crime, watched them for some time, and one day engaged Crippen in conversation in order to make him laugh. When he laughed the captain saw the tell-tale gold teeth, and said to himself, "That's the man." He sent a wireless to England, and officers of the law were waiting the arrival of the boat in the United States, and they laid hold of Crippen saying, "Thou art the man." Sinner, "Thou art the man!"—you are the man we are looking for. You are guilty, guilty before God.

What did David say? He said, "I have sinned against the Lord." It was a wholehearted confession. His sin, when brought home to him, called forth his confession. He did not plead extenuating circumstances. He did not blame it on to anyone now. He was so consciously convicted that he said at once from his heart, "I have sinned." If you want to read his whole confession you will find it in Psalm 51. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." Had he not sinned against Uriah? Yes. Had he not sinned against Uriah's wife? Yes. But his sin was first, and most flagrantly, against God. "Against Thee, Thee only,

have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." He lay all night upon the floor. There was a man who was truly repentant for his sin; he had judged himself as guilty, and he was self-condemned before God. He says: "I have sinned against the Lord." He saw that he had sinned most heinously, and the place he took shows his true repentance.

Then he prays for the means of cleansing. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." The hyssop was first used to sprinkle the blood of the Passover over the sideposts and lintel of the door, when the children of Israel were in Egypt, and the destroying angel was about to pass through the land to smite the firstborn. Then the hyssop is mentioned in connection with the water of purification in the desert, and the third occurrence is in connection with the cleansing of the leper. When David cried to God, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean," he was not referring to the blood that protected from death down in Egypt, nor to the water of purification for the defilement of the desert. No; when he called for the hyssop he thereby confessed himself a polluted leper. When he realized that he was covered with leprosy from head to foot, then he could pray to God, and God could give him the means of cleansing. For when a sinner is self-convicted, self-judged, and self-condemned, then God can show grace and cleanse him.

But how could he be forgiven? There was one way, and only one way then, just as there is only one way now to have sins forgiven. David's Lord must die for David's sin, and David's Lord has died in order that sin may be forgiven. When Nathan brought before David the parable of the one ewe-lamb, that one and only lamb which was taken from the bosom of the owner in order to meet the needs of the wayfaring man, he was bringing to David that in which lies the Gospel of the grace of God. The one and only Lamb dies for the sin of the sinner. The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, was the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers, so He opened not His mouth, and all in order that He might be your Saviour. He went to the cross that He might die for your sin, so that you might be forgiven.

I can never forget the old story of the curfew. Away back in the days of Oliver Cromwell, a young man was sentenced to death for some slight crime, and the sentence was to be carried out on a certain day at sunset, at the ringing of the curfew. It was sad indeed that any young man should have to die for so slight an offence. But it was particularly sad in this case, because he was engaged to a lovely young lady and they were about to be married. The young woman tried everything in her power to get him released. She went to the judges. She went even to Cromwell him-

self, but to all her petitions a deaf ear was turned. She tried to bribe the old sexton not to ring the bell that night, because the execution was fixed at the ringing of the curfew, but all in vain. Everything was arranged. The young man was brought forth at sunset, and the executioner waited for the sound of the curfew from the distant bell-tower, but not a sound was heard. Only one human being at that time knew why. That young lady had rushed into the belfry, climbed the long stairs leading up into the tower, and laid hold of the tongue of the curfew bell. As the sexton pulled with all his weight upon the rope, the bell reeled to and fro, but not a sound escaped from the tower; the young lady hung to that bell-tongue and swung to and fro with the bell. The pain was excruciating, and she was almost in despair as she hung and swung with the movement of the bell; but she would not let go, for she loved her future husband. At last the ordeal ceased; the sexton desisted when he thought he had done his duty, and left the belfry, not knowing that the bell had not sounded and the curfew was not rung, for he was deaf. The girl then hurried away to the place of execution, and found everything was ready. Oliver Cromwell himself was there, the condemned man was standing with the noose around his neck, and they were waiting for the ringing of the curfew, but when no sound came, Cromwell sent to find out the reason. Then the young lady fell before him:

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"And her brow, late white with sorrow,
Glow with hope and courage now.

At his feet she told her story,
Showed her hands, all bruised and torn,
And her sweet, young face, so haggard
With the anguish it had worn,

Touched his heart with sudden pity,
Lit his eye with misty light;
'Go, your lover lives!' cried Cromwell;
'Curfew shall not ring tonight.'"

Her lover's life was spared because of the great love that led her to suffer such agony in order to save him.

Let me lead you to another, a greater scene, even to Calvary, where David's Lord, and yours, dies for your sin. He goes through all the agonies and sufferings of the cross to deliver you from Hell. That young man would never forget his sweetheart's affection for him, but you have never once responded to the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, so wonderfully expressed at Calvary.

Nathan drove home David's sin when he said, "Thou art the man!" But we tell you of another man—the Man Jesus Christ—and say, "This is the Man!" "Behold the Man." "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." It was not David's weeping that cleansed him. Weeping over sin will never put your sin away. It was when David confessed his sin to God that God

gave him the articles of cleansing, and washed him whiter than snow before His eyes. As soon as he confessed, Nathan said, "The Lord hath forgiven thine iniquity, thou shalt not die." Just before, he was under the sentence of death. He confessed his sin, and now he is no longer under the sentence of death, for Nathan announces to him, "Thou shalt not die." The Lord Jesus Christ would be your Saviour now, dear sinner. Confess your guilt and acknowledge Him, trust Him, believe in Him, and thou shalt not die. Believing in Him, thou shalt have everlasting life.

The next thing we see is that glory is assured to David, for he said, "I shall go to the child." He knew the child was in glory. Think of David's lament when Absalom died, how he cried, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" He knew Absalom was lost, but he knew the child was in glory, and he had for himself assurance of glory, for he said, "I shall go to him." In Psalm 32 he says, "Oh, the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!" God had covered his sin; God had forgiven his transgression; for He had blotted out his iniquity with blood.

Now, sinner, you can know that same blessedness—you can have that joy in your soul—if you will acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and believe in Him as your Saviour. Thy sins shall be pardoned for His Name's sake.

You might say, "But you don't know what a great sinner I am." Look at David's sin; could there be anything worse than that? God forgave David, and God can forgive you your sins. God can blot out your iniquity with the blood of Christ for, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Away back in the days of the Czars of Russia, a young man grieved his father a great deal with his prodigality. He had gone into every sin, but especially deeply into gambling. The father thought perhaps a change of environment would help, and he obtained for him a commission in the army of the Czar, but, instead of getting better, he grew worse. One night after drinking and gambling, he went to his room in the barracks, and there in the candle-light he listed all his obligations, and at the bottom he wrote, "Who will pay all this?" Then tired and worn out and discouraged, he fell asleep. The Czar himself was passing through that barracks on a tour of inspection, saw the light at that late hour, entered the young man's room, read the list and the question, and took in the whole situation at once. He leaned over, and wrote his signature over against the question. When the young man awoke he found written across the sheet of paper the one word, "NICHOLAS," and he knew that the Czar had visited him and had promised to pay all his debts. Sinner, bring your sins to God—no matter how deep-dyed they may be. Write across them,

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“Who will pay all these debts? Who will cancel all these sins?” God is not marking iniquity today, but stands ready with forgiveness. “There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared.” There is forgiveness for you if you will but turn to Him. Then turn while it is yet the day of grace, and be saved for time and eternity.

THE LOST OPPORTUNITY AND ITS SEQUEL

(1 Kings 20 : 35-43)

A PROPHET once had a message to deliver, and gave that message from God in the form of a parable to wicked King Ahab. Ahab was riding home in triumph after a great victory over Ben-hadad, King of Syria. That morning had dawned with the children of Israel, like two little flocks of kids, facing the Syrians who filled the country, threatening to overwhelm Israel, and now the end of the day saw the Syrians and their king defeated by God's intervention and the Israelites rejoicing over their wonderful deliverance. But as the king passed on, his eyes lighted upon a man by the wayside who looked like a wounded soldier, full of trouble and grief, for he is covered with ashes and blood. The man cries to the king and tells his sad story. In the midst of the battle an officer brought a prisoner to him with the command to "keep the man," with the assurance that, if by any means the man were missing, his own life would be the forfeit; but while he was busy here and there with other things the prisoner escaped: and now he was in terror in case he should be put to death. Ahab listened to the man's story and

refused to interfere, saying, "So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it."

Ahab was about to drive on, but the man hasted after him, threw aside his disguise, and instead of a wounded soldier pleading for his life, Ahab sees a fearless prophet of God, who pronounces sentence of death upon him for his neglect in allowing Ben-hadad, the Syrian king, to escape after God had delivered him into Ahab's hand. Ahab had been faithless to his trust; he had had the opportunity to put the enemy of Israel to death, and he failed, sparing Ben-hadad contrary to the commandment of God.

Now Ahab, the King of Israel, was a man who had enjoyed unique privileges. He was a king, and the son of a king, and he had the high place of being the monarch over ten tribes of Israel, but he also had the unenviable reputation of being the most wicked of all the rulers in the northern kingdom, for he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him; and, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, he took as his wife, Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him in addition to the worship of the golden calves that Jeroboam set up. It is recorded that he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings that were before him. And that wicked woman, Jezebel, his wife, helped him on his onward road, cutting off the prophets of the Lord who testified in

Israel. But God showed Ahab great kindness. In his own house there was a man, Obadiah, the governor of his house, who feared the Lord greatly. And God sent to Ahab the greatest of the prophets, Elijah the Tishbite, who not only warned him of his sinful course and God's judgment that would fall upon him, but wrought miracles before his very eyes that should have brought him to repentance. And when the king of Syria, with thirty-two other kings with him, came and besieged Samaria, God sent a prophet to Ahab saying that He would deliver the great multitude of the Syrians into his hand, and he would thereby know that God was the Lord. This was the second defeat of Ben-hadad, king of Syria. Again, a man of God had prophesied that the great multitude would be delivered into Ahab's hand that he might know that He who delivered him was the Lord. A hundred thousand footmen of the Syrians fell in this battle, and the rest fled; even their king became a prisoner, and Ahab, whose life depended upon "keeping this man," let him go, and his own life was the forfeit.

Now God has given every man many and great privileges, and to every one an important charge to keep. He has committed to you that which is of priceless value, your precious soul, which He estimates at higher worth than the whole world. There is nothing with which it may be compared. That soul shall live forever, either in Heaven, in the place of everlasting joy, or in the regions of

the lost, the place of endless woe. Suppose you meet a man with scarcely a shred of leather to hide his aching feet, his clothes torn, hungry-looking and woe-begone; and you are informed that that man has vast estates and a rent-roll of fifty thousand a year. You step up to him and say, "Man, do you realize that you have an income of fifty thousand a year?" and his answer is, "Tell me something I do not know." What would you think? You would reply, "He must be mad. I never heard of such a case." Stay, my friend, I know a case worse than that; and as Nathan the prophet said to David, "Thou art the man!" You have a soul, infinitely more precious than a vast estate bringing in thousands a year, and yet you do not value it aright. If you could bring all the gold and precious stones of the world and heap them higher than the Himalayas, the glittering mass would be worthless in comparison with your soul.

When the young princes of the royal house of Sweden were but children, two of them, Prince Gustaf, aged six, and Prince Sigvard, aged five, were permitted to stay for some days at a little cottage in a lonely part of the country, with only one maid in charge of them. Far away from the formalities of court life, the little princes enjoyed themselves immensely. But the police authorities, upon whom the responsibility for their safety devolved, had an anxious time of it, and, fearing that the royal heirs might be kidnapped, they

sent two officers to keep watch over the cottage. These men were not acquainted with the district in which their new duty lay, and a few days after their arrival, the following message was received from them at the Stockholm Police Bureau: "Have been guarding the wrong cottage all this time." You may smile at the strange mistake, and observe that after all it did not matter much as nothing serious happened in the case of the young princes. True, but permit me to call your attention to a similar mistake often made, but attended with most disastrous consequences—a mistake which you perhaps are making, and of which you yourself may be the hapless victim. A young wife says to her husband, "My dear, we must not continue to eat this kind of bread. I have been reading in a medical journal, and it appears that fine white bread has not the body-building properties possessed by brown bread. And in the future we must cook our vegetables differently. By the old method of boiling they lose their important salts. We must get one of the new patent cookers recommended by the journal, for we must be most careful of our diet." Have you not heard words uttered like these? Then you will understand what I mean by "guarding the wrong cottage." There are two cottages of which you are the owner. One is of priceless value, and should demand every care, but you neglect it. The other is of less worth, and is already showing signs of decay, and very soon it

will collapse altogether and fall to the ground; and yet upon it you bestow all your attention. What are these two cottages? Your soul and your body. The one of infinite worth is your soul; the other, already showing signs of decay, is your body. Tell me which you have been guarding. Is it not true that you have been attending only to your body, and neglecting your soul?

We may imagine a master leaving on a journey, and committing two things to his servant's care—the baby, and the baby's clothes. On his return, what would he think if the servant came to him and said, "Sir, here are the child's clothes, all neat and clean. I have attended to them carefully every day." "But where is my darling?" cries the master. "While you have attended to the clothing, the child is lost." Is this the account you will render to God regarding your body and your soul? "Lord, here is my body; I was so careful of it every day. I bathed it, and fed it, and clothed it properly." But what about your soul? Does your body receive all the attention to the utter neglect of your soul?

A lady who possesses a valuable diamond keeps it in a beautiful case. She is going abroad, and she takes it to her banker, and says to him, "I put this in your care. Look to its safety during my absence." On her return she calls to see him about her diamond, and he hands her the case saying, "There is your beautiful case, madam." "But," she cries, "where is my priceless jewel?"

"Oh, I am sorry, madam; I lost that." The case is worthless without the diamond. Why do you not put your soul first?

Ahab's life depended upon how he kept his charge—"Thy life shall be for his life." To lose that which was committed to him meant death. And you have had a precious charge committed to your safe-keeping. If you lose your soul, the loss will be everlasting. Your eternal destiny hangs upon this. If your soul is saved it will mean Heaven forever; if you neglect your soul and it is lost, it will mean Hell, and that forever.

"Or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver." For the careless soldier there was a loop-hole of escape, but if your soul is finally lost, there is no remedy for you; there is no such a hope in the Word of God as "a second chance." Things then are fixed, sealed and settled eternally. "The redemption of the soul is precious and it ceaseth forever." "Because there is wrath, beware, lest He take thee away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." The precious blood of Christ, the great ransom paid for your deliverance now, will not avail you then.

"As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." He was so busy attending to other matters that he lost his precious charge. You say, "His excuse was extremely weak when his life was at stake." But is not your excuse for soul-neglect just as weak a one? Will it be true of you that you were so busy here and there that

you lost your soul?—that you were so completely occupied in attending to the needs of your body that your soul was gone forever? You may say, “My business demands so much of my time that I have not a moment to think of anything else,” and then for all eternity regret your neglect of the one thing needful. When the favored guests were invited to the Marriage Feast, their excuses amounted to just this: “We are so busy here and there that we cannot come,” and the reply of the King was, “None of those that were bidden shall taste of My supper.”

Esau was a man who was so busy here and there that he neglected the business of his soul. So busy hunting was he that he nearly died from faintness. He had a priceless possession in his keeping, the birthright, and he sold it for a morsel of meat. Later on he was so busy here and there that he lost the blessing, for he came too late, and it was gone forever.

The rich farmer who had such a wonderful harvest was so busy with his crops and planning where to put them, that he had no time for eternal matters. “Much goods for many years,” he said to himself; but God said, “Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” While he was busy here and there he lost his soul.

An old historian tells us that Alexander the Great, being much taken by the witty answers of Diogenes, bade him ask what he would and he should have it. The great philosopher demanded

the least portion of immortality. "That is not mine to give," said Alexander. "No," said Diogenes; "then why should Alexander take such pains to conquer the world when he cannot assure himself of one moment to enjoy it." What the great philosopher said to the great conqueror might well be said to every man who is giving himself so earnestly to the affairs of this world that he is running the risk of losing his precious soul.

When King Ahab heard the soldier's story, he pronounced sentence at once: "So shall thy judgment be. Thyself hast decided it," he said; but unwittingly he thereby passed the sentence of death upon himself. He was like David, after Nathan had told him the parable of the ewe-lamb, when the King said, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die," for Nathan answered, "Thou art the man!"

The King would show no mercy to the wounded soldier; he passed sentence of death upon him, and thereby judged himself by his own mouth; but when you pass sentence upon yourself mercy is extended to you, just as it was to David when he confessed, "I have sinned." I wish you would pass the sentence of death upon yourself without delay.

"Thyself hast decided it," said Ahab, and Ahab also was judged by his own mouth. "By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Job 15:6; Matt. 12:37; Luke

19:22). Repent and believe the Gospel, for if not, your own words shall meet you in the coming day of judgment; and, "What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?" Thyself hast decided it. You decree your own destiny; another cannot decide this for you; it rests with yourself. This sin lies at your own door. If you receive Christ, glory is assured for you; if you reject Him then Hell must be your portion. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."

The prophet threw away his disguise, and, instead of a wounded soldier, King Ahab discerned one of God's prophets with a message of death to him. The Lord whom you have so often refused in the Gospel will change His way of speaking to you in a coming day. Now He speaks in grace as a Saviour, saying, "Come unto Me." Then He will appear as a Judge from whose face the heavens and the earth shall flee away, and the One to whom you have said, "Depart from me," shall use that very word to you, and you will wish in that day that you had never been born.

Ahab was angry; he went to his house heavy and displeased. In being angry with God's messenger, he was angry with God. Do not thou be angry with the messenger, but now, at once repent.

Think of Ahab's end. Grace lingered over him for three years longer, but he died impenitent, and his whole house perished. The judgment of

God fell upon this apostate King who seized the inheritance of God's people and neglected the salvation of his own soul. Elijah prophesied to him that the dogs would lick his blood in the very place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, but he would not hear nor fear. Micaiah warned him of his danger, but he went into battle with a disguise upon him, but no disguise could protect him from the judgment of God. An arrow shot by a Syrian at a venture found an entrance between the joints of his harness and he was wounded to death. The king whom he spared was the instrument of his death, just as the Amalekites whom Saul spared were the means of his death. If you refuse Christ today, the memory of lost opportunities will haunt you forever. Cease to be busy here and there, and attend to your own soul, for if you die impenitent like Ahab, refusing God's grace, there is nothing for you but His judgment. Decide now. "Thou would'st be saved; why not tonight?"

GOD'S GRACE TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

(2 Chronicles 33: 1-20; 1 Timothy 1: 12-15)

THERE is a striking parallel in the above Scriptures, for in Manasseh, the chief of sinners in the Old Testament, and in Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners in the New, you see man at his worst and God at His best. The wickedness of man reaches its climax and the grace of God is magnified in the salvation of each, for, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." There is nothing too hard for the Lord, and the greater the sinner, the more glory accrues to God in showing forth His mercy to such an one.

Manasseh was a most highly privileged young man. Few have such opportunities as were his. He was not only born in a palace, but he had help by precept and example, for his father was a monarch and one of the most godly kings that ever reigned in Jerusalem. King Hezekiah, his father, did more to bring back idolatrous Israel to God than any before or after him. He opened the doors of the Temple that had long been closed; he cleared out the rubbish that had accumulated in God's House; he put the Levites back into their

office, restored the due form of worship, saw to it that the lamps were relighted; he stamped out idolatry, and even ground to powder the brazen serpent because the children of Israel were worshipping it, and called it, "a piece of brass." This man of God, this righteous king, was the father of Manasseh, a father who loved him, prayed for him, and instructed him in the holy oracles. So far as privileges went, Manasseh was exalted to heaven; reared amidst the greatest light, living near God's House, acquainted with prophets whose warnings and loving entreaties he heard, and hearing from a child the Holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation. Wonderful opportunities and correspondingly great responsibilities were his. And how many are like him today—children of Christian parents, raised in godly homes, attending the Sunday School and Gospel Services, hearing God's messengers, becoming intimately acquainted with God's truth, and yet in spite of all, like Manasseh, turning away from God, casting His grace behind their backs.

Consider his rebellion and wickedness. At the age of twelve he ascended the throne; he began to reign at that tender age when many turn to God and live. Our blessed Lord, when He was twelve years of age, was found in the Temple amidst the doctors, hearing them and answering their questions, "about His Father's business." And you are not too young to die at twelve. You

will recall that the daughter of Jairus died at that age.

Manasseh began his wicked acts in his youth, and spread them over his manhood, and he progressed in iniquity until, as king, he became worse than all that ever reigned before him; yea, worse than the heathen around, and it is said that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Such is sin! The sinner in his guilty practices becomes more and more hardened until his conscience is seared, and he drinks iniquity like water. Is it not true that you are doing things now that last year you would have blushed to do?

Manasseh "did evil with both hands earnestly," to use the expression of Micah (7:3). It looks as if he had been raised up by Satan to destroy the works of God, so well did he succeed in his wickedness. He tore down with his right hand what had taken his father years to build up, and he set up with his left hand that which had taken centuries to pull down. He was so possessed with an evil spirit, and so determined in his iniquity, that he set up a carved image, an idol that he had made, in the House of God. He reared up altars for Baalim, and worshipped and served the host of heaven. He builded altars in the House of the Lord and in the courts of the Temple. He worshiped Moloch, and caused his children to pass through the fire in the Valley of the son of Hinnom. And in spite of the fact that he had the Word of God, which commanded wizards and

necromancers to be put to death, he went over to spiritism, used enchantments and witchcraft, and dealt with familiar spirits, consulting with witches and wizards. Not content with serving the Devil himself, he made Judah to sin in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He got the people to adopt the same creed as himself, and seduced them to do more evil than the heathen whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel. He cut off all that was of God and spared all that was of the Devil. He chose that which was from Hell and rejected all that was from Heaven. His father had been one who was in the closest touch with and influenced by God, and the son was under the influence of Satan.

And you say, What has all that to do with me? I ask you, Which, Heaven or Hell, influences you? Have you not sinned with both hands, casting the truth of God, His precious Word, behind your back, and gone right into the things of the world? Have you not torn down that which your father built, and turned from God to idols? Yes, you can worship and serve a silver image in your eagerness for business and the dollar. Have you not, like Manasseh, used your influence for evil and not for good? No man liveth to himself, and you, if away from God yourself, can seduce others and encourage them on the downward road. Have you never caused anyone to pass through the fire, by persecuting those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, laughing at them, taunting them, because

they belong to Christ, saying hard things to and about them? Remember, when you touch Christ's saints, you touch Him.

"And the Lord spake unto Manasseh, and he would not hearken." Here is a man who hardens his heart, yields himself to Satan, and sins with a high hand. Here you have the wilfulness of the sinner in his reaction to God's grace. The Lord speaks to him, but he closes his ears to the voice of God. It was not that he did not hear, nor could not hear, but that he *would not* hear. Do you recall what is said about such men in Psalm 58:3-5?—"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear: which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Manasseh was like that, estranged from God, turning a deaf ear to the Word of God, refusing to hear, no matter how graciously the message was sent. God made him to know he was living in sin, yet he went on determinedly in his mad career. God brought before him the commands and promises made to the fathers; but what did he care for God or His Word? He thrust his father's instructions and God's offers of grace behind his back.

And let me ask you, What have you done with your father's instructions? And what about your mother's entreaties and tears? Perhaps by turn-

ing your back upon all that was good and gracious you have broken your mother's heart. It is recorded of Sir John Sloane that he had the heartless sayings of his unnatural son assembled together, framed and hung up on the wall, with these words printed underneath: "Death-blows given to his mother by George Sloane." Is not every sin a death-blow dealt by the sinner?

Not only by his father did God speak to Manasseh. He spoke to him by His servants, the prophets, warning him of the judgment that would come upon him because of his wicked ways (2 Kings 21:10-15). These prophets came to Manasseh to drive home to his hardened heart his guilt, to bring his sin home upon his conscience, but he refused to listen. God always has His messengers. He is never without His witnesses. Has He not oftentimes sent warnings to you, messengers and messages to reach your conscience? What has been the result? Have you refused to listen? Is your conscience so seared that the message is in vain?

Now if Manasseh will not hearken to God's message by the prophets, God will make him hear by pain. God sometimes puts a man down upon his back, if he will not listen while he is able to walk. Elihu observes this in God's gracious dealings with man: "He is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain. . . . Lo, all these things, God worketh oftentimes with man to bring back his soul from

the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living" (Job 33: 19-30). So God sent the king of Assyria against Manasseh. Manasseh was defeated and fled, and tried to hide himself among the thorns; but he was taken, bound with fetters, and carried to Babylon. You cannot escape from God. Adam tried to hide among the trees of the garden, but God brought him forth from his hiding-place. Manasseh was taken and hooked—for this I understand was the Assyrian method of securing their prisoners, by a hook through the nose or lips. In the case of severe illness when the patient cannot or will not take food by the mouth it must sometimes be given through the nose: to save the life the food must be given somehow. Manasseh refused to hear the Word of God by his ears; well, he must be hooked through the nose. God allowed his enemies to put their hook in him, in order to bring him to an end of himself.

"And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him." In the prison he learned what he would not hear in the palace. He had plenty of time to think when he was immured in the dungeon. It was so with Onesimus also; he learned in the prison at Rome the lesson he would not learn in Philemon's home in Colosse. And has not God given you time to think about your sins?

We would have given this man up as only fit

for Hell, but God is long-suffering, and at last this sinner receives grace that makes him fit for Heaven.

“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
And who has grace so rich and free?”

Only God can take a beggar from the dunghill and set him among princes.

And now Manasseh's conversion takes place; and it is a complete turning around. He becomes a new man. You say, “Impossible! Such a man could never be converted!” Queen Victoria once visited a paper-mill situated near her castle at Windsor, and the foreman, who did not know who she was, conducted her through the whole plant. The good Queen was intensely interested in every process of the paper-makers' art, and just before leaving she was brought to a room where a number of rag-pickers were emptying the dirty contents of their baskets, the rags which they had collected from the gutters and alleys of the city. She viewed the large pile of filthy, blackened rags, which looked as if they never could be made clean, and asked the foreman what he could possibly do with these. To her amazement he answered that these rags would be converted into the finest grade of white paper. After the Queen had gone, the foreman learned who his visitor was, and some days later he dispatched to Windsor Castle a package of the purest and most delicate paper bearing the Queen's image, with a note in-

forming her that this paper had been made from the very rags that she had seen on the occasion of her visit. And God can take up vile, unclean sinners, no better in His sight than filthy rags, and cleanse them from all their iniquities, put His image upon them, and make them meet for Heaven. This is conversion as the Bible teaches it.

Manasseh repents; when he was in affliction he besought the Lord, he greatly humbled himself and prayed. Before he had turned from God and exalted himself; now he turns to God, judges himself, and humbles himself. He thought of his God, the God of his fathers; he thought of his sin, his haughtiness, his rebellion. The evidence of the prodigal's repentance lay in this, that he returned to his father. And Manasseh's repentance was real; he humbled himself and besought the Lord his God. He was as much in earnest in his prayer as he had been in his iniquity.

"And God heard his supplication." God always listens to the cry of the penitent. It is this cry that fills Heaven with joy. He is "a God ready to pardon." What son of Adam's race can say that Heaven is closed to him, when it is open to such a man as Manasseh? This man, who defied God, shed innocent blood, worshipped demons, and erected altars to Baal in the Temple, finds a God who is rich in mercy to those who repent. Think of John Newton, the blasphemer, and of Jerry McAuley, the drunkard and thief—men

whom God regenerated—and learn from them what God can do for you.

“And God brought him again to Jerusalem.” He returns to his kingdom a soundly-converted man. In the very city where he had sinned he lives for God, a new creature walking in newness of life. Many think that conversion means to be taken to Heaven. No! Conversion is to enable you to live here, and let people see what God can do for a sinner. The demoniac in Mark 5 wanted to go and be with Jesus, but the Lord said, “Go home to thy friends, and show them what great things the Lord has done for you.”

“Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.” When he returned to Jerusalem he looks upon his old follies; he sees the gods his hands had set up, the idols and altars he had erected; and he takes away these strange gods, and removes the idols and altars that he had built, and casts them out of the city. Who would have believed in his conversion if he had continued as an idolator? He knows that the Lord He is God, and he serves the Lord God of Israel, and Him only. He repairs the altar of Jehovah and sacrifices thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings. The Thessalonians, like all truly converted sinners, followed the same course, “They turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven.”

Now I desire to call your attention to Saul of Tarsus, “the chief of sinners” of the New Testa-

ment. Like Manasseh he started young on his downward course. In early life he showed his enmity to the Lord Jesus Christ and to those that loved Him. When the first martyr, Stephen, was stoned to death, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of Saul, who was standing by consenting to his death. If Manasseh caused his sons to pass through the fire, Saul caused the saints to pass through the fire of persecution. He beat in every synagogue and imprisoned them that believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He sinned with both hands, tearing down with one hand what the apostles had built up, and laying hold of the saints with the other hand. He breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the Church, binding and bringing to Jerusalem all whom he found believing in Jesus. God spoke to him in many ways, and pricked his conscience, but he kicked against the pricks. Stephen prayed for him, the saints prayed for him, but he was exceeding mad, and persecuted the Christians even to strange cities. But God laid him low amid the thorns, and put His hook in him, when on his way to Damascus, intending to stamp out the name of Christ from under heaven, Saul is stricken down by the glory of a light brighter than the noonday sun. He falls to the ground, and a Voice speaks to him from Heaven. The risen and glorified Christ appears to him, and the self-exalted and defiant Saul of Tarsus is led into Damascus a poor, blind, and humbled man. What thoughts filled his bosom,

as for three days he sits in darkness, seeing nothing, eating and drinking nothing! He is now repentant, humbled, and self-judged. And the Lord sends His servant Ananias to open his eyes; he receives sight, arises, is baptized, and is strengthened by food. His conversion is genuine. He changes his company forthwith, associates with the disciples at Damascus, and straightway preaches in the synagogue that Christ is the Son of God. After many days there is a conspiracy to kill him, and when the gates of the city are kept by the garrison day and night watching for Saul, the disciples let him down through the wall in a basket. The proud and self-righteous Pharisee is a humbled and subdued man.

Like Manasseh, he returns to Jerusalem, the scene of his former acts of violence, and there he tries to join himself to the company of the saints, the disciples of Jesus. But they are afraid of him—and no wonder! Here is the man who had made the streets of Jerusalem ring with his deeds against Christ and the Christians, and now he desires to join himself to the disciples. But Barnabas takes him by the hand and brings him to the apostles, and tells them how Saul had seen the Lord in the way, and had been soundly converted, preaching boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. He is now received among the saints, and is with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem; and then we see him speaking boldly in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Here is the

chief of sinners in Jerusalem preaching Christ, the One whom he had formerly denied, and building up the Church that formerly he had made havoc of. That is conversion for you, if you have eyes to see.

Sinner, you need not despair. Think of the height and depth of God's mercy that could reach and save such sinners, and make them to become patterns of what the grace of God can do. Before a bridge can be opened for traffic, the engineers put it to the most severe tests. They cause to pass over it a load greater in weight than it will ever be required to carry again, and when it has been proved able to stand that strain they have no fear but that it will bear a lesser load. The two greatest sinners have passed across God's bridge of salvation, and you need not fear to come and try it for yourself. Once there was a man who in his journey had to cross a frozen lake; as he was hesitating at the edge, wondering whether it would bear his weight, he saw a horse and cart with a load of hay crossing over safely. This gave him confidence, for he reasoned that if the ice could bear that strain he could safely venture. God has saved the chief of sinners in both dispensations, and He has recorded the story of His grace to them in order to encourage you to cast yourself upon the God of all grace.

GOD SPEAKING TO MAN

(Job 33)

THE book of Job portrays God's great interest in *one man*. From its forty-two chapters we learn God's whole purpose was to bring Job to judge himself. When the Lord Jesus was here upon the earth, He took a long journey just to meet *one* woman, a woman whom *we* would not have liked to have been seen speaking to; but the Lord wanted to reach her conscience and save her soul. By these instances God would show that He is bent upon blessing sinners, on blessing *you*, and that He has pursued you all these years in order that He might bring you to an end of yourself, that, like Job, you might say, "Behold, I am vile."

Job was a man who was moral and upright, but he was self-righteous and self-satisfied. He boasted in his integrity; he said, "I will hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go." He prided himself upon the fact that he had been eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and that he had caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Job claimed that he was innocent; but innocence passed away with the garden of Eden. No one can take that ground today: "For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not." But when at last Job got a real

sight of himself, and saw that he was in the presence of a holy God, he laid his hand upon his mouth.

His friends misjudged Job, of course; they did not understand God's dealings with him; and all that they said only brought to light what was in the heart of Job — self-righteousness and self-justification. Are you upon that line, my friend, clinging to your own good works? If so, I hope Job's experience may give you a sight of yourself in God's presence.

Job's friends were no help to him, for they only condemned him on suspicion without any real grounds. What he needed was not a ministry of condemnation, but a ministry of conviction. It is easy to condemn, but it is difficult to convict. Job was angry with them, for he knew that their accusations were untrue. They could not place their finger upon one sinful act in his life. When God purposed to reach the conscience of King David he sent Nathan the prophet to him. Nathan was so wise in the way that he put the truth before David that the king passed sentence upon himself without knowing it. Then the prophet drove home the shaft of conviction, and the king confessed his sin and called upon God for mercy. When the Lord was here the Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in the very act of sin. They put her in the midst and told the Lord what Moses would have done with such an one. Moses' ministry was a ministry of condemnation. Now

the Lord wanted to convict those men of their own sin, and so He invited that man among them who was without sin to be the first to cast the stone. What was the result? They all went out, from the greatest to the least, convicted by their own conscience in the presence of Him who is the Light of the World. He then turned to the woman and said, "Where are thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" and she answered, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." The Son of Man did not come into the world to condemn the world. His desire was to convict men of their sin, but not to condemn them. And when the Holy Spirit was sent into the world He came not to condemn but to convict men of their sin.

Now you will notice that the ministry of condemnation by Job's friends came before the ministry of Elihu. Elihu spoke in grace. And the Law which was a ministry of condemnation came before the Lord Jesus with His ministry of grace. The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Job's friends having failed to reach him were silenced, and then Elihu came upon the scene. He came forward as a mediator, and in this way is a type of Christ, the Mediator between God and men. Elihu was full of matter; he must give utterance to the spirit within him. According to Job's wish, he stood before him in God's stead; he told Job that he too was formed out of the clay,

and his terror would not make Job afraid, neither would his hand be heavy upon him. In all this Elihu points forward to the Lord Jesus who came here as the Mediator, into whose lips grace was poured, for He was full of grace and truth. He tabernacled among men in that Body which was prepared for Him, made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Sent hither by His Father, He was in God's stead, so that He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and thus he who received Him received the Father. The Son of God came in this manner so that His terror would not make us afraid. When God gave the Law the people could not come near the Mount; His terror made them afraid. So terrible was the sight that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." But when those who looked upon Him who was born in Bethlehem, when they saw Him in the Temple in the midst of the doctors, when they viewed Him sitting at Jacob's well, they were not afraid of Him. You pass a field at the time of harvest and see hundreds of sparrows picking up the grain; but when they see you they fly away. Why? Because your terror makes them afraid. How could you approach them without terrifying them? Only by becoming like them—a sparrow. The Creator of mankind drew near to us by becoming like unto us, by taking a body like ours and by becoming poor.

The word "Mediator" in the New Testament is the equivalent of the word "daysman" in the Old

Testament. Job felt the need of a Mediator when he cried, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." Now the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who can do that; He can lay His hand upon God and upon the sinner and bring both together. As the Son of God, He can lay His hand upon God; as the Son of Man He can lay His hand upon the sinner in all his need. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Observe it is the *Man* Christ Jesus who is the Mediator, not a woman, not even His mother, as some would have us believe.

Job had wrong thoughts about God. He thought that God was against him, and that He was cruel to him. And many there are like him today. They think that God is harsh and cruel; whereas God has always been for man and not against him. God is not cruel, for "God is love." Job charged that God counted him as an enemy, marking all his paths, and putting his feet in the stocks. But God never counted Job as an enemy. He restrained Job, keeping him back from evil; and is not that rather a proof of love than an occasion for judging God? Have you never found God hedging up your way, restraining you, holding you back in an evil course? God blocked the way of Balaam, and did everything He could to hinder and stop that man in his downward path. Moreover, God is not accountable to man; He giveth not account of any of His matters to His

creatures. But man is accountable to God, and you must give an account to Him concerning all your matters.

Then Elihu tells Job of the different ways in which God speaks to men. "God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not." God speaks to men today. Why is it that they will hearken to any voice but the voice of God? He spoke in times past by the prophets, and men refused the messages they brought from God. Then He spoke in His Son, but men would not listen to Him. Now He speaks by the Holy Spirit, and says, "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

God spoke twice to Cain. First, when he made his offering, God spoke to him pointing out the right way; and then He spoke a second time, after Cain had slain his brother; but Cain refused to hearken and hardened his heart. Have you not felt that God has been speaking to you? Perhaps this very day you have had proofs of it. Do not turn a deaf ear but listen to His voice. Job accused God of being silent to him. God spoke to him through Elihu, and God speaks to you today through His servants and through His Word. Why not listen to His voice?

"God speaketh in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men." So many men, during the day, have no time to think, that God speaks to them during the

night. He speaks by dreams and visions. I **can** recall how God spoke to me in a dream once: I dreamed that I was in Hell. On another occasion I dreamed that the Lord had come for His own, and that my father and mother were taken and I was left. Have you not been spoken to in this way? It was thus that God warned you and sought to reach you.

If you stand near Big Ben in London, England, at three o'clock in the afternoon you can hardly hear it strike the hour? Why? Because the noise of the traffic is so great. But if you stand there at three o'clock in the morning you will hear it clearly enough; its note is loud and distinct then. Men are so busy during the day that God has to speak to them in the quiet and stillness of the night. Thus He spoke to Abimelech and to Laban. He warned them in dreams.

God does this to "withdraw man from his purpose," and to "keep back his soul from the pit." God wants to turn you from your purpose. He has a purpose for you, one far better than your own. He has preserved you from danger, kept back your life from perishing; many a time you have had a close run for it, but He preserved you from destruction. That was God's voice speaking to you, and yet you have never turned to Him.

"He is chastened also with pain upon his bed." How often God speaks to a man by laying him upon his back on a sick-bed! But even then some will not listen. It has astonished me, when called

upon to visit the sick, to find how many are indifferent to God's dealings with them. God brings men thus to the very gates of death to arouse them. Perhaps God has spoken to you in this way, and you have been brought near to the grave, and you are still unsaved, God's solemn warning to you has gone unheeded!

We have here a picture of the downward course of man. Many today teach that man is raising himself, when all the time he is going down. All men, high-born and low-born, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, religious and irreligious, if still unsaved, are on the downward road. My friend, no matter how wonderful your character, unless there has been a regenerating work of God in your soul, you are travelling that road whose end is the pit. Thank God, you are not there yet; but I trust you will waken up to this fact—that God has hitherto been keeping back your soul from the pit. There is no need for you to go there for God has found a Ransom. The Ransom is His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator who gave Himself a Ransom for all. God says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: *I* have found a ransom." God has provided this for you; it is His way and the *only way* of deliverance for you.

King Darius gave his royal sanction to a new law, gotten up by Daniel's enemies, forbidding any one to pray to God for thirty days under penalty of being cast into the den of lions. Daniel

was proved to have acted in direct opposition to the command, regardless of the heavy penalty that he was thereby incurring. Daniel had very good reasons for his course and conduct, but that is beside the question: he neither denied it nor justified himself. The person who was most disturbed was the king. He felt the situation keenly and set his heart to deliver the offender; he labored at the task till the going down of the sun. Here was an awkward problem: his longing heart struggled in one direction, but his written law impelled him in another. He loved the offender, but what should he do about the offence? The position was a painful one; he must either do violence to his heart's best wishes or dishonor the law which he had sealed with his own hand. The eyes of the whole nation were upon him; the accusers were determined that Daniel should be cast into the pit with the lions. There was no way of escape, the king must do his duty, and Daniel was thrown into the lions' den. But God has found a way of deliverance for you. The sentence of death was upon you; God's holy law said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." But the God who loves you says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit. I have found a ransom." His own beloved Son becomes the Mediator, He yields His life for yours, the sin-question was settled by His death, and now there is deliverance for the sinner who trusts in Jesus.

Notice how it is put here. "God looketh upon

men, and if any say, 'I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not;' He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Have *you* ever said, "I have sinned?" These are the most difficult words for a man to utter. Men will justify themselves and try to evade all personal responsibility; they will attempt to escape by any loop-hole, rather than take the place of "guilty" before God. When Nathan drove home David's guilt upon his conscience, the king said, "I have sinned," and Nathan said, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin. Thou shalt not die." When the prodigal returned and said, "Father, I have sinned," he was forgiven. When the publican in the Temple cried, "God be merciful to me the sinner," he went down to his house justified. God is not only gracious and merciful, but He is righteous, and He has a righteous reason for showing grace and mercy. Through the death of the Mediator, He is gracious, He is ready to pardon; today He is not a Judge but a Saviour. Then turn thou to Him.

"His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth." The unclean sinner is now converted: like Naaman, he is cleansed, and he becomes like a little child. Our Lord says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." There must be a new beginning; conversion must take place. We who are saved were once sinners and unclean, but we have been

born again and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, to show forth His praises. We are like the harps in Solomon's temple, used in the worship of God: formerly they had been algum-trees, but they were converted by Solomon into instruments for the service and worship of Jehovah. "He shall pray unto God, and He will be favorable unto him, and he shall see His face with joy."

"His life shall see the light." He shall "be enlightened with the light of the living." This is what happens when a sinner receives the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ. Now as the light of the sun will not shine into your room if you draw the shutters and pull down the blinds, neither will the Gospel enlighten you if you wilfully close your heart against the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In view of all he has said, Elihu now closes with the word of advice to Job, "Hold thy peace." Job had been full of talk: his mouth has been opened in self-justification: now Elihu says to him, "Be silent." The man who justifies himself cannot be justified by God. Can a man full of talk be justified? No; his mouth must be closed; then he can listen to the Mediator. Have you taken your true place before God, acknowledging your guilt, or are you still bent upon self-justification? Only when you cease to justify yourself will the way be open for God to justify you.

A man who was being tried for murder thought

that his lawyer was not handling the case properly, and so he wrote on a slip of paper these words, "If I don't speak for myself, I shall be hanged," and passed it to his lawyer. The lawyer read the note and hurriedly penned in answer: "If you speak for yourself, you will be hanged." Now, dear friend, if you speak for yourself you will be damned, but if you say nothing in self-justification God will justify you. The Gospel declares that, "It is God that justifieth," and that, "He justifieth the ungodly." If He justifies you, He will not only pardon you but will clear you of all your guilty past, and place you where none can bring a charge against you.

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