

ERNEST
ROE
SERMONS
1917–1931

Volume Two

“All truths flow out from the Godhead, that is, from the three persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit; and every truth of the Godhead centres in the incarnation of the Son of God.”

SERMONS

PREACHED 1917–1931 BY

ERNEST ROE

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ERNEST ROE

(1883–1967)

Minister of the gospel amongst the Strict Baptists
for 65 years

In two volumes

VOLUME TWO

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PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

These sermons, preached nearly 100 years ago, will be edifying reading for the Lord's people. Ernest Roe does not shun to declare the whole council of God, in plain words, with God-given authority, liveliness, boldness and faithfulness. He expounds the word carefully and soundly. He does not speak to please men but God. He brings us to examine ourselves in the light of scripture, whether we are in the faith, whether Christ is in us or not, whether we have merely a form of godliness without the power, a dead profession. Preachers are exhorted to examine their calling to the work, hearers to test what they hear. Professors are rebuked sharply, as necessary, that they may be sound in the faith.

He gives encouragement to the person who feels, by the Spirit's teaching, that they are the worst sinner that ever lived, He tells them of the love and mercy of God in Christ, the fulness and freeness of the great salvation provided for ungodly, needy men. He faithfully and graciously presses upon the heart of every seeker the vital importance of receiving the forgiveness of sins by the Spirit's application of the blood of Christ to the conscience before they die. There is no settling of a sinner down short of Jesus Christ.

Fears, doubts and cries to God for confirmations of mercy are recognised as part of the life of believers. He very severely castigates the fraternity which despises such exercises. But we are warned that doubts and fears are not sufficient evidence to think we are true believers. Unbelief is acknowledged as inherent in our fallen nature but it is never encouraged in these sermons; it is condemned as God-dishonouring sin. He exhorts to believing trust in Christ, and the cleaving to his precious promises, as the only way of rest for the weary, seeking soul. Yet that work of faith is affirmed to be not of ourselves but the gift of God. So the sinner has to fall, crying for mercy, at the feet of the sovereign, merciful high priest who will never cast out such a suppliant.

The glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is set before us as the supreme objective of all creation, and the Lamb as the

brightness, the visible expression, of this eternal, invisible God. He asks whether God's glory is supremely important to us, more than our personal needs, even our salvation? Love to the person of the Lord Jesus, flowing out of his love to the believer, is firmly established as the motivation to God-glorifying living. He questions a life of profession which goes on from month to month, year to year, without fresh communion with the Lord.

All the Christ-glorifying fruits of the Holy Spirit are set before the individual believer and the church as the paths of godliness in which they are ordained to walk to the glory of God. He exposes the profession which upholds the orthodox doctrines but which is irritated by the precepts. He insists on humble, godly deportment, private prayer and Bible reading, sacrificial giving to the cause of Christ, concern for the brethren, love which extends to giving private reproof where necessary, wrestling against temptations, obedience to the ordinance of believer's baptism.

He rejoices in the eternal, electing love of God, in the blessed person of Jesus Christ, in the Saviour's righteousness, blood, high priesthood, intercession, in the glorious hope laid up in heaven for the believer. He makes this telling point: when dutiful soldiers are living in the squalor, horrors, evil and death of trench warfare do they want to live there for ever? Do they not earnestly want to be discharged and return to the joy and peace of their homes? And should not the true Christian soldier, plagued by the wretched man of sin within him, by the world, the flesh and the devil, be looking for the coming of Christ to take him to his heavenly home, whether by death or by the Lord's second coming? And he asks, Are we such a Christian?

Ernest Roe was born in 1883, was sent out by the Lord to preach when he was 17 years old, and ministered for over 65 years in the Strict Baptist churches. The text of his last sermon, preached on Lord's Day January 1967, was Paul's persuasion at the end of Romans 8: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." His Lord took him, in an instant, to his heavenly home the following Saturday.

He had several pastorates. All eighty-six sermons, except one, in this two-volume work, were preached between 1922 and 1931 when he was the pastor at Brixton Tabernacle. The first eighty-

one were published monthly as the "Brixton Tabernacle Pulpit" and the original numbering has been retained. They have been lightly edited, particularly in the re-structuring of some lengthy, complex sentences. Capitalisations have been aligned with the A.V. Bible. Added at the end of this Volume Two are six of his public prayers.

In your reading of these sermons, our desire for you is that of the apostle: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

“THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE”

Wednesday evening, September 16th, 1925

“The Lord is in his holy temple.” Psalm 11:4.

It is observable that the psalmist must have been called upon to undergo practically every shade of experience that belongs to the living elect of God. Temptations, falls, restorations, confessions and supplications, renewings, persecutions, deliverances and manifestations of a spiritual character were thickly in the path of David, for his own benefit and for the glory of God. And, as recorded in the book of Psalms, they were for the rich consolation of the elect pilgrims who have arrived at home and for those who are now marching to heaven.

The particular time to which this 11th Psalm refers may be difficult to decide, but it would seem to belong to the earlier part of his pilgrimage. One would say, not dogmatically, but suggestively, that the period alluded to is when he was in Saul's court. And at that period, he had many troubles, many persecutions, as you are aware, and the advice of some of his friends was: “Flee as a bird to your mountain; run away, David, from the court; run away from your calling, run away from your home, run away from your surroundings. You are hedged in on every side, your enemies are many, bitter, strong and cunning; flee, David, it is your only possibility of escape.” There is a possibility, seeing he was made of the same nature as we, that his own infidel heart might say, “That is what I had better do,” but, at this time, the faith with which God had blessed him also had a word to say, and when faith begins her speech to infidel thoughts, faith is going to conquer.

Faith, as expressed by David, says: “How say ye to my soul, flee, the idea of it, to suggest such a thing to me, do ye not know that in the Lord I put my trust? Why should I flee? How can you say *that* to *me*, seeing that I have committed my case with its multifarious concerns into the hand of Jehovah, the Lord God omnipotent who reigneth? Flee, I cannot flee: why should such a man as I flee?” Oh! troubled believer, you only who can appreciate it, when the advice of infidelity to you is “Flee,” it is

nice to have a little faith raised into motion by the good Spirit. He gives it to enable you to commit your case and your way into the hands of Jehovah, and feeling the blessedness of the comfort and the peace which faith brings into your soul, you are able to reply: “Flee, I will not, I cannot, I dare not, because he, into whose hands my case has been committed, has pledged and promised personally to see me through; to flee would be a sin and almost a sin unpardonable.” May God bless us with a little faith when infidelity is at work!

Along that line of thought the psalmist’s soul seems to have travelled until we reach the verse we have read as our text. He indicates to us that his faith is looking to the Lord, and to the Lord in a particular spot, “The Lord is in his holy temple.” As though he should say, “The foundations of law and government in the state are out of course, and if the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do? They can do this, as the Lord helps them, they can look up; one foundation will never be out of course, never be removed.” The psalmist, looking from earth, from king Saul, his government and the many enemies around, looks up to the holy temple where God dwelt, and he felt and enjoyed the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

There is no peace to you while you are looking around you, while you are looking at your troubled pathway, believer. You will look at your troubled pathway and I am not condemning you for that; you have the flesh in you, and one knows by personal experience what the flesh does. You cannot shut your eyes to your circumstances. When God sends trials, he intends them to be trials, and, therefore, you have to face them, you have to go through them. But the blessedness is that God does not leave his own though he may appear to forsake them for a period, but he helps you to look above your troubled circumstances. And as your faith is thus raised up, you will behold God, quiet, undisturbed in the holy temple above, guiding, controlling, and bringing all your circumstances to a most desirable and blessed end. That is the reality of this word, “The Lord is in his holy temple.”

“The Lord is in his holy temple,” that is, *he is in heaven*. The fact that the Lord is in his holy temple of heaven proclaims a finished redemption, a completed atonement, justification of a sinner before God, sure, certain and everlasting, and the ultimate glorification of the whole election of grace. Let me briefly speak

to this first thought. Oh for grace with which to do it, that you might hear it rightly and beneficially, and that I might speak it to God's honour! Christ came to earth in a temple not made with hands, but fashioned by God the Holy Ghost. Almighty God incarnate is a most heart-refreshing and soul-cheering truth; there is none like it; it has in it the seeds of all truth. The purposes of eternity, the decrees of the eternal Three, the immanent acts of Jehovah's mind, the ultimate purposes of God as they shall be shown in the glorification of the elect in heaven, all meet in the incarnation of God's dear Son. They all point to that, and, as far as one can judge scripturally, all the glory a sinner can ever bring to God in grace, and all the glory he can bring to him in glory hereafter, will take its rise from Almighty God becoming incarnate. It is a blessed mystery and we love it:

We love the incarnate mystery,
And there we fix our trust.

We are led there, we are fixed there by God the Holy Ghost. His incarnation is not a theory with us; it is not a myth, it is not a notion; it is a blessed, a hallowed experience. Blessed be his holy name for becoming the Son of man!

Oh! what he came for when he thus came! You have heard this story times without number, and yet, as I speak it, to my own soul it is as fresh as the juice of a grape, and God forbid we ever tire of listening to it or speaking of it! What did he come for? The general answer is, to make an atonement for sin. True, yet there is a more important answer than that—he came to make an atonement for *my* sin, and therein lies heaven. When a sinner is born of the Spirit and led of the Spirit, he is led to inquire after this profound and blessed truth, did Christ make an atonement for *me*? Brethren, if any of you can rest without that point being settled by the Holy Ghost, one does not envy you nor your religion. No, it is not to be envied. Mark what I say, a religion that can rest satisfied without some comfortable hope, raised by the Holy Ghost, that Christ made an atonement for you personally is a religion of no avail. It will not support you in temptation, it will not do you any good in death. If you are born of the Spirit, you will say: "Amen, that is absolutely true, and my soul begins to feel it more than ever; I must have this point settled, answered and established in my conscience that he made the atonement for *me*."

You will love the incarnate mystery, you do love it now; it causes a glow of holy desire to run through your soul when you hear one speak of it; it makes you feel: "Blest Son of God, I wish it were true that thou wast incarnate for me. If I could feel that point settled I would be satisfied as to my soul's security." friend, that warm desire toward this blessed incarnate mystery is the budding of spiritual and holy love in your soul. But, while that is true, you will be waiting round the posts of wisdom's gates, you will be hanging on the skirts of his glorious garment, begging and beseeching him to touch you personally, to lay his hand on your sore conscience and say, "I will, be thou whole." Though there may be degrees of it in the operations of the Holy Ghost, yet when the atonement is in any measure brought home to a poor sinner's conscience, he believes and cannot help it, he rejoices and cannot help it, he anticipates heaven and cannot help it.

People may think we are speaking exaggeratingly when we speak thus. Friend, it is a reality; we are not merely talking about theological truths and doctrines, we are talking of that which, in the mercy of God, we have felt, handled and tasted. Oh! when Christ brings it home to the conscience in any measure, there is a personal ring about it that endears the atoner. How lovely Christ becomes as thus revealed to the sinner, even though he has not the personal assurance, but has a comfortable hope, and it is a good one, in his heart! Thus the Holy Spirit leads him on to trace the steps and work of Christ on earth, and then see him taken home to heaven. This is not merely a doctrine; it *is* a doctrine, plus a blest reality. The sinner, thus led along, will see why he went to heaven. Why? Because he *must* go; he had done his work on earth, he had redeemed the soul, and he must go back. "He came to earth for this purpose; he has done it, why need he stay?" says the soul. So he goes back to his Father's right hand, and there his Father seats him on his own throne. And surely, *surely* it is not irreverent when I say the Father must have thought and felt the very essence of those words recorded in the gospel, which he will say to his people one day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." If ever there was a servant of God faithful to his God, it was the Son of God as mediator, and one does not hesitate to aver that heaven received him with loud acclamations, and he was worthy of the same. "Oh!" says the sinner, "if ever I get there, I will add to the acclamations also,"

and so you shall, for heaven has decreed it. We will not lag behind in crowning him King of kings and Lord of all. We hope we do not lag behind now (we do try to stop people from robbing him of his honour, let it bring us what it may), and we hope we shall be among the first in heaven in acclaiming him Lord of all. Faith does it now sometimes; some of you know what it is to crown him in this present state. You are favoured folk, never mind what you may have to bear, that does not matter. While you have a heart that feels a little faith bubbling up sometimes and placing the crown on King Jesus, while you have any moment whatever in which you are led to bless his holy name for a little hope in his atoning blood and justifying mercy, you may have to go through sore trials in this life, yet you are favoured persons. You are more favoured than perhaps you think, blessedly favoured.

Well, now, the soul sees him safely seated at the right hand of the Father, and blesses the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for a finished redemption, a completed atonement, a free justification and the ultimate glorification of the church of God. "He is in his holy temple." Further, the faith of the sinner, at times, under the gracious power of the Spirit, will get a glimpse of his occupation there. Faith looks at nobody else but him, faith scorns everything less than him. If your faith settles down in anything less than Jesus, it is wrong, for true faith will not settle down in anything less than Jesus. She loves to get a glimpse of him, if even only transitory; she does love it and appreciate it. What is his occupation there? *To be a friend of sinners*—that is his occupation there. He is in his holy temple now while one is speaking and you listening, and he has his eyes on the speaker and on the hearers. The Lord is looking at you, the Lord is looking at me; his eyelids are trying us, like as one when he wishes to inspect anything closely has apparently to close his eyelids. He is looking down now, and he knows whether we feelingly want him or not. He knows whether our hearts ring true, genuinely true to him; he knows it, we cannot deceive him, and neither do we wish to; we want to be among that number who rejoice under the open inspection of King Jesus. The friend of sinners is looking on, and he can see a few things in the sinner who really wants him; he can see sin better than such can see it, he can see it in such where they cannot see it, but we will pass by that thought for the moment.

He can see something else as he looks down from his holy temple. What can he see? He can see the faintest movement of a spiritual heart towards him; that is what we cannot see; you cannot see it in me and I cannot see it in you. He can see the faintest desire, he can see the desire as it increases, for he increases it. He can see it grow into a more vehement flame until the soul bends before his sacred Majesty and with a repenting spirit, an aching heart, a disjointed soul says, "Give me Christ or else I die." The friend of sinners can see this. He can see you searching after him, feeling for evidences of the new birth, tokens of his divine love to you, searching in his holy word to find a crumb that will enable you to hope and to dare to venture to believe in him. He can see it. He can see the inward remorse, the godly repentance, and the holy shame in your soul which you have on account of sins done by you and sinfulness in you. He looks from his holy temple with an eye of pity, mercy, and compassion upon such a man, upon such a woman, and he will reveal his character as the friend of sinners to such. He has already done it in some measure to you, for it is a great thing to desire him rightly; it is a great thing indeed to desire him rightly. He has given that real desire: that is being a friend to you. It is he that gives you a vehement flame at times: that is being a friend to you. It is he that points out to you that which makes you ashamed: that is being a friend to you. It is he that rebukes you and smites you; it is he that allows the devil to knock you about fearfully, as you think. All that is being a friend to you. A strange way, you judge it to be, but he is a friend, for "The Lord trieth the righteous." He tries them, and the devil is among one of his agents, but presently you will find the Lord reveal his character, as a friend of sinners, in another way, more comforting to you. The bitters come first as a rule, but what a blessing that he has some sweets to bestow—when he speaks to you, and speaks as he only can speak!

I was thinking yesterday that we should have had the prodigal son this evening for the subject, and that seemed to open up very nicely. "He began to be in want." The father saw that, and when the boy comes back, what a reception! Here is the friend of sinners, he is the everlasting Father; he sees you as he looks from heaven, coming to him, not by local motion, but by inward thoughts, spiritual repentance, and supplications, and as he sees you coming he will speak to you as the father spoke to the

prodigal boy. The boy was just full of what he would say to his father about his sins and felt unworthiness: "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He would be quite satisfied to be an hired servant of such a father: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." It was right he should feel all this, but observe the father said at once, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." When the friend of sinners speaks to you like this and owns you for his son, what a revelation it will be of his amazing mercy and kindness! "He is in his holy temple" thus to receive and speak comfortably to his returning sons.

"The Lord is in his holy temple" *in his human nature*. One cannot explain this precious truth, but hopes one believes it. "God was manifest in the flesh" is yet a great mystery of godliness, and that sacred humanity was essential to him as priest and sacrifice while here, for otherwise there could be no shedding of blood, without which there is no forgiveness of sins. This was his "*somenhat*" he had with which to offer before God. Blessed offering too! He wore this nature of ours (sin excepted) in union with his true and proper deity; he lived in it, he died in it, he was buried in it, he rose in it, he ascended to his holy temple with it, and there, this night, he still has it and will never lay it aside.

A *Man* there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide.

There, in the most holy place, not made with hands, is the God-man, the man Christ Jesus, with our nature, never again to suffer, never again to atone for sins by death.

He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," and they thought he spake of the earthly temple. It was just the same when in his soul suffering he cried, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: Father, glorify thy name." When there came that voice from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (in his resurrection), some said, "It thundered!" What further proof need we that the natural man cannot receive the things of God? What further proof is required that the unspiritual person

can hear the most sublime spiritual things and put the most ridiculous construction upon them, while a spiritual soul bows in reverence and holy awe as it sees the temple of Christ's body pulled down and then built again, and the divine Lord in that holy temple?

A mighty scripture is Hebrews 2:17: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Look at the grace in these words, "That he might be *a merciful* priest." Surely he was merciful from eternity. True, he was, but then the unspeakable mercy is that we have a great high priest who is merciful, not merely theoretically, but experimentally. The experience he endured in his sacred nature has given him a blessed fitness to succour them that are tempted, as the next verse shows. One is persuaded that an application by the Spirit of these words would be more than enough to lift a poor sinner in his feelings at the gates of hell to the doors of heaven. Blessed high priest! And one feels the exclamation cannot be suppressed. How suitable every way is Jesus! To know him a little, to love him a little, to believe in him a little, to praise him a little, what a blessing it is! What he was on earth, *that* he is now "in his holy temple," "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." His mercy is still full, unchanging, everlasting, though enthroned in glory (richly does he deserve that glory too). He lives to manifest his mercy to all that come unto God by him. He is in his holy temple to minister holy things to *sinners*, not to tall Pharisees. Holy pardons, holy peace, holy righteousness, holy food, holy drink, holy comfort, holy access to his Father, are all in his merciful hands to give freely.

Sinner, do you not at times see all these things in his hands, and say, "They are the things I want. Oh that he would give them to me!" So he will, sinner; he is "in his holy temple" for that purpose, and so you shall prove one day. "He is in his holy temple" continually bearing the church of God on his shoulders and breast before his Father. He is the true Aaron who can speak well, yea none better than him, in silencing Moses in the hearts of his people, presenting their poor, lean petitions before Jehovah without one defect in them, speaking to them for himself and his Father also. And he will not rest until his bride is with him. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given

me, be with me where I am.” That prayer of the priest in his holy temple secures the time, place, and circumstances of his people’s death, and also their triumph over the last enemy and their entrance, body and soul, into his holy temple, never to go out.

There is another thought: “The Lord is in his holy temple,” that is, *in his church*, which is composed of the elect people of God, quickened, washed, justified, sanctified, and built on Jesus Christ himself as the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. “The Lord is there” is the hallowed name of this building—a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is a holy city by rich atoning blood, holy teaching, holy visits, holy faith, holy love, and holy work. May we rightly understand this honour and dignity placed on the church of God by feeling it true of ourselves! What a soul-cheering view it is when faith is raised to see Christ “in his holy temple,” in the sacred nature which he took when he came on earth, doing all that was essential, as the high priest before God, to bring his family home. How soul-cheering to see him by faith in his church, and to see him as the sovereign Lord of all, for “His throne is in heaven.” Seeing he is thus holding all power in heaven and in earth, how can one of his people come short of eternal rest? Oh for a measure of triumphant faith to *feel* and *then* to say, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature (beneath the canopy of heaven or in the very bowels of hell) shall be able to separate us (*me*) from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” “The Lord is in his holy temple” to bring us to that point of joyful experience, on earth, in *some* measure; in glory, *without* measure. May God bless his truth! [Amen].

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

Lord's Day evening, October 25th, 1925

“And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it might not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.” 1 Chronicles 4:10.

What we read in the ninth and tenth verses of this chapter is all we know definitely of Jabez: this is all the Spirit has been pleased to tell us of this man. But do we really need to know any more of him? If the Holy Ghost tells us he made this man to pray and God gave him a full answer to his prayers, what more can we know? Happy for us if as much can be said of us! If the Holy Spirit can say of us in our dying hour, “Behold they have prayed, they do pray, they die praying!” it will be the very best thing that can be spoken of us. Oh to be taught of God to pray! Prayer is a mighty weapon. It is the exercise of the graces of the Spirit—faith, humility, hope, love, meekness, and such of a like character going forth to God in real supplication. None of these things do we possess by nature: to have them in any measure is to be taught and blessed of the Spirit, and such persons will get to heaven—and such only.

“Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!” The blessing of God is what living souls covet. Sinner, if God is your teacher, his blessing will stand before your eyes as the one desirable thing. His blessing maketh rich, as you know, and your sanctified poverty will cause you to approach him who has unsearchable riches to bestow. You will find it desirable to understand, as far as possible, the ground of blessing—that is, how and why God can bless such as you. “Men shall be blessed in him.” *“In him* (that is, Christ) shall all nations be blessed.” Jesus Christ, as the priest, making atonement unto God, is the only ground of God blessing sinners. This foundation of blessing is wide, deep, infallible. In no other way did the Father ever determine to bless his people, and, in this way, he can bless without any dishonour to his law or throne. In Moses (the law) there is *no blessing*, only

curse, curse, curse: "Cursed is everyone (religious or profane) that continueth not in all things which are written in the law to do them." It is a case, sinner, of our being either under the curse or the blessing—Moses or Christ. If we are under the law (as we most certainly are by nature), then, dying so, we shall be cursed for evermore. Solemn truth! There is *no curse* under Christ, nothing but blessing there, and all who are like Jabez are taught of the Holy Ghost to look to God to bless them *by* Jesus Christ as the fruit of blessing them *in* Christ from eternity. They look to God with a heavy heart through sin and shame, and say, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me through the sufferings of thy dear Son!" And when they get a glimpse by faith that the blood has removed every impediment, broken every barrier, taken away every sin, so that a holy and righteous God can say, "I am thy salvation," then truly do they begin to feel the efficacy of the atonement in their consciences and the love of God in their hearts. To apprehend the atonement rightly is to see the law fulfilled, sin abolished as to its condemning power, the Father glorified in every perfection of his nature, and nothing whatever that can prevent blessings coming down into the hearts of seeking sinners. Sacred blood! Blessed blood! Thanks be unto God for the atonement of Jesus! There is no reason now why God should not come forward and bless all who cry like Jabez.

The elect are blessed by God in Christ before the foundation of the world, and that, too, with all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1). And if one gets a grain of faith in the atonement as completely removing all barriers to blessing, so far as the sinner's experience of them is concerned, it will kindle hope, enlarge one's feelings and enable one to plead with God boldly, "My sins are beyond finding out, in thought, word, deed. I am black, and my heart desperately wicked, yet I see a little of what the blood of Christ has done. Oh, bless *me*, Lord!" Deliverance will come to that person one day.

"*Bless me with forgiveness felt and enjoyed in my heart,*" the sinner will say. He feels his condemnation solemnly true. He does not want to be told the law is against him, he feels that; think what he will, look where he will, say what he may, he feels the law is against him. "Condemnation, Lord, I have no doubt about, for I feel it so true in my soul, but do let thy mercy in forgiveness come home to my heart; let it be just as real as condemnation is to me, Lord; let me enjoy it, not in my imagination, but in the

affections of my heart.” Blessed thus, the man will be blessed with peace in his conscience by that forgiveness sealed; not a dead peace which the wicked have, not a hardened peace which the dead professors have, but a living peace, a speaking peace, through atoning blood applied. Peace by which the sinner, in the conscience, stands clear before God, all fair, without spot; here he stands at peace with heaven. Living seeker, *this* is what you will seek; what a happy spot to be in, next door to heaven. “Lord,” you will say, “bless me with such peace!” And he will.

But will not *repentance* be felt? Truly it will, and must, before forgiveness and peace are known. Do we know what repentance means? In these terrible worldly-religious, formal-professing, truth-hating days, what a blessing if we know this blessing of repentance vitally! Repentance is not remorse, though there may be, and is, a measure of remorse in true repentance; yet, in remorse only, there is not true repentance. Judas had remorse enough and hanged himself. Peter was blessed with repentance (and hatred to his sins), but went out and wept bitterly. Repentance is a sweet-bitter and a bitter-sweet. Bitter herbs and the passover Lamb are not yet separated. “Love and grief” are a blessed compound which none but truly sanctified souls know. When both are in motion towards Christ, repentance is not far away. Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give this blessing to Israel, and he will fulfil his work. Hence, if we are among his Israel, we shall know something of repentance. Repentance will empty us of self-importance, banish our excuses for sin, kill us to self-justifying in wrongdoing, dry up self-pity, and place us at his feet with a solemn sense of “Behold, O God, I am vile!” Repentance will go to the throne at times with a wet eye and look regretfully at sin, and make the sinner say, “Lord, cause me to hate sin, and bless me with more compunction of heart, for thou knowest that if hell were dried up tonight I would not sin again if it were possible!” Repentance does not fear hell, it fears God!

“*Bless me indeed.*” Jabez wanted “indeed blessings,” and so do we, for there are blessings which are not blessings *indeed*. Money is a blessing (what can be done without some of it while we are here?), but it is not a blessing *indeed*. With many it has proved to be a curse indeed. You will not pray for that as the chief good (though many true children of God know what it is to beg of him to send some of it). Christ will be more than money. Health

is a blessing for which we are not as thankful as we should be, but seeing that many with health have ridden fast and furious to the pit of perdition after a wretched life here of sinning, it is not a blessing *indeed*. Health of soul will be preferred and sought, if the soul is already healthy, far more earnestly than health of body. The latter is far from being despised, but it is not Jesus Christ. We do not stand in much danger of neglecting the body for that is ever with us, but may God bless us with grace to put the soul before the body.

A blessing *indeed* is a *soul* blessing; it is to be blessed of God for eternity. Poverty may be a richer blessing to the soul than money; affliction (sanctified) more than bodily health; as indeed is the case with many of God's people of whom you have heard or seen. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," was spoken by one who was brother to Jabez, and was blessed *indeed*. To be made more sober-minded, to walk more tenderly in his fear, to have real hatred of sin, and warmer desires to live to his glory, as the fruit of sanctified trouble—friend, this is to be blessed *indeed*. I must leave this part or else we shall not get far tonight, but to be blessed and blessed *indeed* is all summed up in Acts 3:26, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to *bless you*, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." May that be our blessing! To be turned from sin's guilt to forgiveness, from its condemnation to justification, from its pollution to sanctification, from its dominion to eternal peace and rest, this is to be blessed *indeed*.

"*Me*." What intense individuality of feeling is indicated in this "me." "Bless *me*, a poor, helpless, worthless individual, who has done nothing to deserve blessing; *me*, who, having tried to pray, feel I cannot pray; would believe, but unbelief is too hard for me; who can see a great beauty in spiritual love to God, but find my heart filled with whatsoever is unlovely. Bless *me*, Lord, who am but dust and ashes in thy sight and corrupt in my own sight; *me*, who would have the Christ of God in my heart to love, serve, honour and obey always, but find another mind averse to all that is good." Do any present know *this* person? Then you do not think the picture overdrawn. It is well known that some are so very goody-goody that they have never at any time transgressed the Father's commandment. But for such there is no fatted calf, no ring, no best robe, no shoes, no feasting, no rejoicing, no falling on the neck and being kissed with reconciliation. But for

the prodigal keenly alive to his shame and his Father's goodness, who feelingly stands before God with his face burning with shame and his mouth dumb, and yet with his heart begging for a share of his Father's love, mercy, forgiveness, and home—*he* will get those things one day. For all such there is the ring, the shoes, the feasting, the kissing, the robe and the best one too (no secondhand thing, but the very best which Immanuel produced), and eternal merry-making. *That* will be blessing *indeed!*

"*And enlarge my coast*" is the next part of this prayer. The literal meaning of this we gave this morning, hence there is no need to repeat it now. There is a measure to our experience, and one feels it needs no great line with which to measure it either. In other words, one feels his religion to be very shallow; not that one would speak lightly of any gracious work of God in the soul, for truly his work is great as to its nature and end. But yet who is it, at times specially so, that does not feel his "coast" is very small, his experience of spiritual things very narrow? Who is there, but appears to know far more of sin than grace, the devil than Jesus, the world than the Spirit of God; more of slavish fear than faith, more of darkness than gospel shining, more of bondage than liberty, more of the ministration of death than the ministration of life, more sighing than singing, more condemnation than justification? Who is there, I say, that feels this is his case but must mournfully confess it before God?

Oh! if there is one word more fitting than another where this is the case, it is the prayer "*enlarge my coast.*" Guilt contracts; everything that comes from the law into your conscience contracts; it closes, it binds, "it gendereth to bondage." Many of you, I believe, know this case. Your heart is shut up in prayer, fear, dread, doubt, uncertainty, so much so, that if you were to die tonight, you cannot say, after all your years of profession of his name, where you would go. It is astonishing how much of even experimental language can be borrowed, but if this is not a piece of mere formal cant with us, but is our real, solemn, painful, heartfelt case as before God, we shall be like Jabez, and try what calling on the God of Israel will do. Like him, we shall take our narrowness of heart and mind to God with the beautiful request, "Enlarge my heart, Lord." "Enlarge me out of this guilt, fear, bondage, dread, uncertainty; give me heart-softness, make my heart to hunger and thirst after thee, Lord: fill me with thyself." "Enlarge my heart" in everything spiritual.

When we take *the* book to read, have you not noticed what an aversion comes over the spirit against that book? Something says, "*Read it,*" and other voices are heard, for in steps the devil, unbelief, the spirit of the world, and this unholy trinity within one has made some put the book down and take up the newspaper or something like it. Do you know the man, the woman, who has done this? Then you need not that I should say, "The fault is that the heart is contracted, cold, largely shut up and needs Almighty God to open it, for he only maketh my heart soft." Enlarge my heart by and in thy word, to meditate in it day and night, that is, constantly. Some wish they had such a heart. Is there any gracious doctrine in that word unto which we do not need enlargement of love and faith? Enlarge my heart in faith, humility, penitence, confession, hatred towards all sin; in love towards the Son of God as the surety and sin-bearer of his people; towards God the Father, and towards the good Spirit. Give me to believe these things with holy power and blessedness and to be vitally supported by them as well as in them. We are well satisfied with the doctrines of grace, for they are the doctrines according to godliness, but we do want to have them deeper in the affection of the heart and realise more of their gracious power to wean from this world and to quicken our pace upward.

"*And that thine hand might be with me*" is a nice spirit, for it is the spirit of dependence upon the Lord. Lord, make us like Jabez in this also! If Jabez was in a position of honour over his brethren as a leader or commander, he did not depend on the power of his sword or in the skill of his brain to obtain the enlargement of his coast literally. He depended on God. We, if taught of God, will feel we want God's hand with us in everything. If we have not the hand of God with us, no profit follows in reading the word of God, in praying, in good speaking, yes, in spiritual thinking and in listening. In providence this truth is essential, for it is his hand which alone can meet our daily needs, and it is nice when one is helped to see and feel the goodness of his hand in temporal matters. Today one may have sufficient and to spare, but it is surprising how money can take to the wings of fear, or panic, or speculation, or something like those things, and fly away. A good bargain today, a good profit this year, so much already stacked by, but if God does not smile on what is gotten, it will be of no use.

Dependence felt on God is a very sweet feeling. Circumstances may be extremely trying in order to bring one to this point (they usually are), but it is a choice mercy to us. Oh, to be able to say under the softening hand of God, "Well, I have not got what others may have, nor what I have had in years gone by, but of one thing I am satisfied: the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him, and on his gracious arms I do desire to fully depend." For what few things you may have around you, you feel you could write upon them all, "God's *goodness* to unworthy me." It has been necessary for the Lord to take away certain things, and to bless the taking away, before some felt much of the real need of this dependence upon God. The lesson well learned is more profitable than the things taken away. He always gives better than he takes away. Job, after his great trial, felt dependence upon God more than previous to the trial. Some would smile if all the ways in which many poor helpless men have depended on God's hand were told. It has been depended upon to clothe the youngsters' backs and feed their stomachs, to open ways for work, to heal the sick, to incline an enemy to be kind, to frustrate malicious designs, to sell cattle (and God has sold them for some of his far better than they could have done), to buy in stock, live and dead. In short, not one half has ever yet been told of how poor men and women who fear God have depended on God's hand, and have no reason to be ashamed of their trust—*not they!*

"And that thou wouldest keep me from evil." This is a true test of grace, namely, how one stands relative to sin. Is sin a pleasure, a study, a continual practice with us? If we find pleasure in sin, where is grace? Grace turns the recipient from evil and constrains him to pray against it. Godly persons want keeping from evil as to doctrine, experience, and life. If the Lord were to withhold his keeping power, and we followed our fallen tastes, we should do those things of which we should be ashamed for ever after, and so too would all who knew us. That is true, and so is this: we have all those evils within us flitting through our minds, and others have too, and we can all be the means of temptation to one another. "Lord, keep us from evil," will be often in the heart and on the lips of the godly. Keep us from evil in the workshop, behind the counter, at the office, in the home, in the pulpit, in the pew, in the church. Everywhere and always, do keep us.

“That it might not grieve me,” continues Jabez. His name means sorrowful, or pained, and grace made him true to his name in this point, and it is a true feature of grace. Evil will bring sorrow: nothing is more certain than that. In hell, sinner (and the Saviour used that dreadful word), if you die unpardoned, you will reap the sorrow of evil-doing. Believer, sin indulged by you also will bring its dreadful results, not penal owing to the sufferings of Christ, but something paternal, even chastisement, and he has the rod for the fool’s back, and will not spare for his much crying. God make evil ever to be our greatest grief and keep us as the apple of his eye!

Finally, *“And God granted him that which he requested.”* Herein shines the abounding liberality of God to Jabez. In these particulars as set forth in the text God answered him. It is one of the greatest comforts to a living soul to see any indication of God answering his prayers. If one does not want answers to his so-called prayers, he must be in a sad state before God. How many of us are tried on this matter as to our prayers? God tries us in not replying, so far as we can see. We may err there, for may he not answer us and we not see it in some cases? In personal matters specially one is tried on this point. “Be not silent unto me, lest, if thou be silent unto me, I become like unto them that go down into the pit,” has made some tremble. Do you know the solemn state of going through the routine of prayer, lulling conscience thereby, but whether God answers or not makes no difference?

But Jabez, with a living need, and with ever-recurring living needs, must have answers. “Give me Christ or else I die,” is a good sign when it comes from the very heart. All like Jabez, want to see God answering them, and if they can see the slightest sign of God answering their petitions, or any of them, they are greatly humbled and also made happy. They perceive it to be a mighty act of grace in God to answer anything they ask for, as indeed it is. The Trinity in Unity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, indite real prayer, and no less than the same sacred Trinity of persons answer real prayer. And for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to answer a worthless sinner—well, if that is not an act of pure grace, what is? It is, and all who wear the character of a Jabez know it is. Such can and do say, “I have a good friend in my God, the very best friend. He has condescended to hear some of my prayers: I have the witness of them, I have the proof of them.

I can point to places where he did answer me to the joy of my soul, to the deliverance from trouble, and I do believe that he will answer others which I hope I have put up in his name, and that I shall live to see him, and be with him, and like him.”

Answered prayers, friends, are good things to have. “This poor man cried and the Lord heard him,” is a good testimony. If he has answered any of your prayers for your soul’s profit, education, edification, and pleasure, he will perfect his work within you. Oh! happy man, happy woman, who can see indications of God answering some of your petitions. Use those indications, as you may be helped, for props for your faith when tempted, strength for your heart when feeling weak, and as a reason for expecting him to be with you in the future, specially when you come to that spot where only Almighty God can do you good. There, in death, may you prove he has answered your leading prayer, namely, pardoned your sins, and then—go to that land where it is all blessing, praise, honour, and glory, to the God of Israel, the God of a poor sorrowful Jabez. [Amen].

SUBSTITUTION

Lord's Day evening, November 8th, 1925

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5.

“That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God,” declares Jesus. And what the majority of professors of the gospel of Christ abominate, namely, the atoning aspect of Christ’s death, his vicarious sufferings and resurrection as the basis of the justification of a sinner before God, God most highly approves of. Man’s estimate of Christ’s work is poor, at best; yea, it is sinful: “We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,” as an utter imposter; but God’s value of Christ’s work is beyond expression. May our thoughts and feelings of Christ’s work be in harmony with Jehovah’s! The Father sees salvation for an elect world in the sufferings of Christ, and that, too, on the principle of substitution. If this principle is not seen in the text, it is not to be seen anywhere in scripture. But it is seen here. Speaker and hearer need alike the Spirit’s teaching to understand this principle, the importance of which is great, seeing it is the only principle by which we can hope to stand acceptable before God.

1. *Substitution does not belong to the law but to the gospel:* not to *Moses* but to *Christ*. The law of Moses does not know anything of putting one person in the place of another by which a debt can be paid, its penalty removed, its curse swallowed up. The one tone of the law is, “Do or die.” To all under its power its stern and just language is, “Obey and live; disobey and die.” There, in the law, the holiness, the inflexible justice of God, his spotless righteousness stand, sinner, every whit as they stood when first proclaimed from Sinai’s mount. It is called “a fiery law,” and so it is; it must consume all who die under its curse; it knows nothing, and in the nature of the case cannot know anything of reprieve, pardon, mercy, hope, forgiveness, or salvation.

Substitution is the placing of one person under the law to obey its precepts, to endure its penalty, in order to save a sinner justly.

This must rest entirely on the good pleasure of God. If Jehovah is pleased to allow one who is capable, willing, and fitted to stand under the law and answer all its demands, then, so well and good; but if God is not so pleased, the law of Moses cannot make one. This is, we judge, “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). God’s hidden wisdom is that as an act of his wisdom and kindness he should allow this principle of substitution to be the one upon which he would magnify every perfection of his unsearchable nature in the justification of his chosen family. Further, Jehovah not only allowed this principle of substitution, but, blessings on his name for ever, he found the substitute! Angels would never have found one, none of Adam’s race can be thought of for one second in connection with this as to being suitable for a substitute. But God provided himself the Lamb for the burnt offering. “I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David (Christ) my servant: with my holy oil have I anointed him, and men shall be blessed in him.” The Father found his eternal Son and commissioned him, as an act of wonderful love, to become manifested in the flesh of his sacred humanity, by which the Son as in union with his deity was surely, really, effectually, the substitute for his church. Love not law; Christ not Moses; grace not works, takes all the praise, for “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” One does desire to know more fully, feel more powerfully, the way by which God saves the sinner.

2. *Substitution declares the righteousness of God in the law.* The law of Moses will never be withdrawn, never become obsolete, never be dead. It stands tonight for all who are under it in its naked truth and majesty as when first given, and will do to all eternity. Time can never wear this law out, for it is founded in the very nature of God. When God can die, then can this law. It is a righteous law, and lives for ever. Now the voice of this law is, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” It is useless one saying, “I am no worse than other people; I have done my best; I have always meant well, and have from infancy mixed with the people of God, have even preached from a pulpit, and met for prayer at prayer meetings.” All this is useless, sinner, for justification; this is no substitute for doing the whole of the law.

God's righteousness in the law demands perfect obedience always, and, in default, the curse comes upon us, and that righteously.

Yet God has chosen some who will never know the curse of the law penally, people who will get to heaven, sinners though they have been all their days, and get to glory with the law on their side too. How can these things be? "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh of the Son of God incarnate. He took the sinner's sin, shame, and curse; that is how it is done. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," and when that statement was made in the Old Testament days the Father knew the one upon whom chiefly that curse would rest. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*. Literally, no fiction nor assumption is here, no figure of speech whether hyperbole or otherwise. All is solemn fact in this mighty transaction.

Here, then, the righteousness of God is declared in no uncertain sound in the sufferings of Christ as the substitute, the surety, for his people. So real was this transaction that Christ calls his people's sins his own: "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." It is Christ in the 40th Psalm without a doubt. Not by transfusion, but by transference, imputation, the sins of the church became the sins of Christ. "He hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." That was a dreadful *meeting* when all the sins of the church were made to meet upon him, but so it was. Substitution thus "declares God's righteousness for the remission of sins that are past...that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." If the Spirit, sinner, has taught you anything of this truth, you have fallen in love with the Son of God.

If any present are, in their feelings, under the curse of the law, I am glad of it; for such a one can hope for deliverance into the gospel blessings. A Scotchman once wished for all the curses of the law to sink into a sinner's conscience. He was misunderstood, as, I suppose, I may be when I say, "May the curse of the law lay hold of every unregenerate sinner here and close his mouth of boasting before God and bring him in guilty!" If and when it pleases God to teach you so, sinner, you will then begin

to look for a surety, a substitute, and long for him to deliver you from the curse of the law. When one gets law-driven, it is hopeful. It is very unpleasant, it is, indeed, very painful, but when such get gospel-drawn, the profit of the pain will appear. One feels that some who talk much about being drawn by love could not explain what it is if they were given a thousand pounds. Love does draw truly; nothing draws like it, but who knows the drawing of the love of God in Christ who has not, in some measure, known the driving power of the law? "By the law is the knowledge of sin," and if one does not seek Christ until he has knowledge of his need of him, then condemnation, curse, and bondage of the law, in some measure, must precede the experimental sense of love drawing to the Father. To all such present I would say substitution will take your heart; you can hear of it with pleasure, for you know it must be the one and only way by which you can hope to be justified before God. It makes you say, "That is the Saviour who exactly answers my deepest needs. Oh that he would save me!" Sanctified knowledge of sinnership out of the law will lead to strong desires after Christ, and those desires shall be granted.

3. *Substitution establishes the law*, that is to say, it causes the law to stand on a solid foundation while God justifies the transgressor of the law. It stood on very solid ground previous to the death of Christ, as we have hinted previously, for it is grounded in the nature of God. Had there been no law given in tables of stone, the substance of the law would have been where it always was—in the nature of Jehovah. The commandments would have been true had they never been revealed, because God himself is holy, just, and true. But the law standing on such solid ground could not let one sinner pass to heaven until Christ had honoured the law and magnified it by his own life and death, whereby the law, in justification of a sinner, is established far better than if the sinner had been able to obey it perfectly. For his obedience at best is but the obedience of a creature, whereas the obedience Christ gave it is the obedience of one far more than a creature. "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." The law has lost nothing in and by substitution.

In the justification of the sinner, in the full pardon of the sinner, God says as he did to Joshua in his filthy garments, "They

shall all be taken away from you, and I will give you change of raiment; I will freely, fully, and eternally forgive you and justify you." When the righteous Judge is saying this to a sinner, the law can stand by the side of Jehovah the lawgiver and say "Amen" and can unite with mercy, grace, and love in clothing the sinner in a righteousness with which the law could not, if it wanted, find the slightest fault. The law is well satisfied with this grand arrangement of God, and well it may be, for it has had all it ever asked or could ask for at the hands of Christ. So it is not, nor can be, tarnished or disgraced while God says to a sinner, "For Christ's sake I absolve thee from all thy sins, I freely all forgive." May he say that to us repeatedly!

4. *Christ is the substitute*, for it is certain he is the one meant by the words "he," "him," and "his" in the text: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Not Israel the nation, but Christ Jesus the Lord's servant (Isa. 52:13) is the person meant. That he should take a nature capable of being wounded, bruised, and striped is a miracle of love. Think of it if you are able, that he, blessed with the fellowship of his Father and of the Holy Spirit in heaven, with not one sorrow, grief, nor anything approaching thereunto, he in such a state of blessedness, should, for the sake of sinners, rebels, enemies, ungodly, condescend to look upon poor mortals and stoop to take their nature upon him (sin excepted), in order that he should be wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities, have the chastisement of their peace upon him, and by his stripes they should be healed! Truly this is a miracle of love that he should have a nature capable of this.

Fitting substitute was he, for he could stand before God for them in all the beauty, purity, and glory of his holy nature as man, bear their sins in his own body upon the tree to the complete satisfaction of law and justice; and also stand before them, and by reason of his being equal with God (for he was God) he could declare his Father's name: "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Through him the Father communicates all he has to bestow upon his family, whether it be for time or for eternity.

5. *Being the substitute, all the sins and sufferings fell upon him*, signified by the wounding, bruising, chastisement and stripes.

Wounded: "They have pierced my hands and my feet." A pierced Saviour is a grand sight to faith. The pangs of his body were great, but greater the pangs of his mind. Dreadful night when he, who was God over all blessed for evermore, fell prostrate on the ground with "my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Was it at this time that he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared? (Heb. 5:7). Though a Son, it was thus he learned obedience by the terrible things which he suffered. "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done," and so it was, for soon thereafter he was taken to Calvary, where it pleased God to bruise him, to afflict him, as the substitute for his people's sins. Then it was his heart was melted like wax, melted in the midst of his bowels. "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me." Wonderful 22nd Psalm, wonderfully fulfilled by the substitute! It is sad to know we have hearts that can sin when the Son of God suffered thus to put it away. Yet can it be that one who has felt anything of the power of his sufferings by the power of the Holy Ghost can yet love sin? If the felt power of the blood of Christ will not subdue the love of sin, nothing will.

Talking of precepts, enjoining gospel service to Christ (all which are absolutely essential, though universally nearly lost sight of in the churches in these days of ease preferred to truth), will not make one soul obey precepts rightly. But one second of real fellowship with Christ in his sufferings will melt the hardest heart, cast out all the demons therein, and fill one with loathing of self for sin and repentance for sin. The grand test of real godliness is what one knows of Christ as revealed in the heart. Nothing else will do for time nor eternity. May we know much of him thus! Chastisement, the punishment due to us was laid upon him; at no other price could peace be obtained. It was exacted, and he answered the full legal dues of Almighty God in the salvation of his elect body. The stripes were numbered: not one more nor one less than justice demanded as the expiation of sin. His sufferings were commensurate with the demerit of the sins of the church as judged by the righteous Judge, and when the last stripe had been given the dear substitute could and did say, "*It is finished.*" What is finished? "To finish the transgression,

and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Sin was finished in the finished work of Christ.

6. In concluding, observe some of the *fruits of substitution* as named or fairly implied in the text.

(a) Transgression, for which he was wounded, is now *forgiven*. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,” and the person who is under the first teachings of the Spirit will seek this first-fruit of substitution and seek it earnestly, wholeheartedly. We feel we need grace to be poured upon us to cause us to seek this mercy more thoroughly than we do. The whole heart has to be in this matter ere one finds him a pardoning God, and surely the Spirit alone can make one a wholehearted seeker for this blessing. “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” Everything must stand on one side to a sinner born again; his trouble is sin, and he must have sin forgiven else he is miserable. “Tell me, O Lord,” is his cry, “that my sins are forgiven,” and that cry continues until he is answered with joy in his soul. Circumstances will not overtop grace, but grace, wherever it is, shall hold the field against all comers. In spite of much coldness felt (and deplored), in spite of innumerable circumstances all seemingly against grace (but they will be fought against), grace shall reign in a child of God as well as on the throne in justification. Very largely today it is seen that circumstances carry away many professing godliness, and hold them in carnality, death, and bondage. The Lord preserve us when in trying circumstances that, at least, a little grace may still be evident, for it is a very solemn matter for one professing to have grace in the heart to be buried under external circumstances and never appear above them. The promise is to him that seeketh first the kingdom, and, without being a judge, one may safely say that the Holy Spirit’s work in a sinner is effectual wherever it is begun, and he feelingly gives him, in his time, the fruit of his Saviour’s substitution, that is, forgiveness.

(b) That *iniquities will not be imputed* is another fruit from this tree, for, as sure as he was “bruised for their iniquities,” so it is equally certain that the Holy Spirit takes of this thing of Christ and reveals it unto them for whom he died. “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” Iniquity, that which has a bend, a twist in it, that which cannot go straight nor right—do you know what this is? All these crooked things of ours come

from a crooked heart, that will not, cannot go right, and all we do iniquitously comes from a heart full of iniquity. Substitution meets that, there was bruising for that, and non-imputation of it is the comfortable fruit. God will not deal with his people according to their serpentine heart, which is so deceitful that only God is able to know it.

(c) *Peace* is also a fruit of substitution: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." The peace of God enjoyed in one's conscience from the applied blood of Christ in the dew of the Spirit, passes all understanding; it must be felt, it cannot be expressed, at least by some of us. I shall leave it at that, but hope we know that word, just a little, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(d) *Healing* is a fruit of substitution: "With his stripes we are healed." To be healed implies disease, and truly we are diseased by sin; such a disease, too, as is loathsome, degrading, filthy, infectious, painful, and, apart from substitution, is fatal. Substitution is the cure, the one remedy, that extends to every part of the disease, and removes both the disease and its effects. It heals pride, vanity, self-importance, for these things cannot live in the heart where, at the same time, *blood* is felt. If pride reigns totally over us, we do not know Jesus; pride cannot live in his presence. Grace humbles. We may talk of Christ all we choose, and use very nice language of him too, but if pride reigns in heart and life, it is but a dead, notional, deceiving talk. We all are so full of self-love by nature; even where grace is, the horrid principle still exists (and more than exists at times); but if faith gets one moment with Christ as the substitute, one will find he loses self in the finding of him, and the loss is our gain.

Worldliness, that spirit which is so subtle yet so sinful, which is with us on our knees, at the Bible when reading, in the pulpit, in the pew, and evidences itself by death (to be carnally minded is death) in speech, actions and life—what can heal us of this? Formal religion can feed it, but never heal it; blood only is of any use here. When faith is at work with and in the blood of Christ, then one is far removed from the spirit of the world.

I daresay many of you know what it is to have the knees stiff, the knees of the soul. They will not, it seems they cannot bend; rocks seem cushions in comparison; neither goodness nor judgments seem to affect this deplorable gout in the knees (this is far worse than gout in the pocket). We have a soul that will

not, cannot, at times does not seem to wish to bend before God; that knows right well that if he does not help, bless, and save to the uttermost, one cannot be saved at all, and yet has no desire in exercise to ask him to do these things for me! I speak most seriously when I say that gout in the pocket or in the limb is play compared to this deplorable hardness of heart. You may give it plenty of lotion (dead services), tons of “what one *ought* to do,” hear hundreds of sermons, read the very best of books, yet all seems useless. Do any of you know and suffer from this complaint? We are tied up to one physician and one medicine—Christ and his blood will soften a rock, make a flinty heart to run like melted wax, and bend the knees both of body and soul before him in contrition, repentance, hope, and love. In short, this medicine will heal any and every complaint of the soul. It is no cheap nostrum, it is not quackery in a worldly-religious market, but it is a healer of all diseases (Psa. 103). Apart from substitution and its blessed fruits felt within, there is no hope for me; what say you? The good Lord more deeply teach us these things! [Amen].

THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE
HOLY GHOST

Lord's Day evening, November 15th, 1925

“And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” Matthew 12:32.

Such words spoken by him who cannot lie, and spoken in such a plain way, must, if we have any grace in our hearts, make us tremble. To speak upon these words, apart from divine help, is impossible. The Lord help us! This morning we spoke to the former verse, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,” showing, I trust, the sufficiency of the atonement and the boundless grace of God in forgiving sin. Here we have a sin which shall never be forgiven. It is a solemn, searching, terrible scripture. I am not aware of another scripture which utterly excludes hope as this; for, if one is left to commit this sin, he is locked up unto eternal despair. Seeing the Saviour himself spake these words, and the Spirit caused three evangelists to write them, we may safely say they teach a most important lesson. It is not desired to make one heart sad whom the Lord would not have made sad, but if God is pleased to help and bless us in our meditation tonight, we would ascertain something of the meaning of the Spirit in this portion, and have a solemn knowledge of the terrible nature of sin in general and of *this sin* in particular. Moreover, it may be someone is here now who has been troubled greatly respecting this sin, and the Lord may have a gracious purpose to make known to such an one.

One is reminded of Mr. Algar Lock, who preached for the immortal coal-heaver (William Huntington, S.S.). He had been an itinerant preacher, but from sore temptation, specially that he had committed this sin, he gave up preaching. One day he was struggling along Cheapside with this temptation strong in his soul, that he had blasphemed against the Holy Ghost. So great was his distress that, to save himself from falling to the ground,

he caught hold of a post at the corner of Bow Church. Just there was an old lady (grace only makes ladies as grace only can make gentlemen) selling tapes, and she invited him to sit down on her stool, which he did. She could discern his trouble was more mental than physical, and asked Lock if it were not so. He admitted it was. "Oh, then," says she, "you must hear the coal-heaver, sir; he will suit you, he preaches nearby every Tuesday night." He went. That night God sent Huntington into the pulpit with this very text, "The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." As soon as Mr. Lock heard the words read he feared he should hear his condemnation sealed, and cried out, "Let me out! Let me out!" In those days the spirit of hearing was so abundant that the chapel was crowded, and, when once in, it was a difficult matter to get out until the service was ended. So poor Lock had to stay, and never regretted it, for the Lord made it clear to his soul in that sermon that he had not been guilty of this terrible sin. The temptation with some souls is the same now, for Satan may make much use of such a scripture to torment a sinner; and though Huntington is dead (yet lives and speaks) the Lord is alive to carry on his work, and if he is pleased to apply anything one may say to the ease and comfort of a tempted soul, it will not be in vain that we have met together.

1. It will be wise to consider, in passing, the exact terms by which the Holy Spirit has described this sin. This is judged highly important, for it is often called *unpardonable*. To quarrel about mere words is an indication of a small mind and very little grace, yet, in a case like the present, we shall do well to use "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth" and drop the words taught by man's wisdom. I cannot decide whether it is correct to call it unpardonable, but this we can say, the Holy Spirit does not so speak of it. If by unpardonable should be meant there is something in this sin which God could not pardon, or as if there were something lacking in the atonement of Christ whereby this sin could not be blotted out, but on the contrary binds the sinner down by an eternal sin, then, personally, I should be disposed to say the term is not a good one. There is nothing lacking in the atonement of Christ, as we tried to show this morning. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men" is the strongest statement one knows of to set forth the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ. *Unpardonable* might seem to imply

that when Christ died, Son of God as he was, Son of man as he was, yet there was a something in *one* sin which his precious blood could not put away. It does not appear to be a question of inability of God to pardon, not insufficiency of the atonement, but rather it appears to be a matter of God's *will*. This should, perhaps, appear if we pass in review what the evangelists do say, and it is observable that none of them speak of it as unpardonable. Matthew says, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, *it shall not be forgiven him.*" Terrible words indeed! "It shall not (not cannot) be forgiven him." Luke says, "But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, *it shall not be forgiven*" (Luke 12:10). Mark says, "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath *never forgiveness*, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark 3:29). Mark, you see, speaking by the Spirit, declares the same as Matthew and Luke, but uses that great word "*never*"—"hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation," or "is bound by an eternal sin." None call it unpardonable, as if there were something in it God cannot forgive, but all do say it shall never be forgiven, that it binds one down under the awful weight and power of an eternal sin. God's sovereignty by the atonement of his dear Son sweeps away all sin, but this one, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, this he will not forgive. And sovereignty shines in the one he will never forgive to the glory of his justice and truth, even as sovereignty shines in the forgiveness of all other kinds of sins to the glory of justice, truth, and grace.

2. *What is it that shall never be forgiven?* Read the three evangelists once more. Matthew, as taught by the Spirit, declares it to be blasphemy, "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." Mark says they blaspheme: "he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost." Luke says the one blasphemeth: "But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven." The united testimony is blasphemy, blaspheme, blasphemeth. The difference is of tense only. In each case the act is the same. In Matthew there is one word that should not be passed by; it is the word "*speaketh*," as in the text, "whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost." This indicates that "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," concerning which God declares, it "shall never be forgiven," is spoken blasphemy. Blasphemy expressed in words. That is the terrible sin which will sink one down to the pit without a vestige of hope: expressed blasphemy against the Holy

Ghost. Had we more grace we should be careful with the unruly member. Little do we think of the terrible power of words, albeit they may be, and often are, very treacherous. To speak after the manner of men, hell hangs on words. Of everything on land and in the sea, such as beasts, birds, serpents, we each have a something far worse than they all. All kinds of beasts have been tamed of mankind, but the tongue no man can tame; it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison: in short, it is set on fire of hell (James 3). “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Little do most people think of the consequences of the sins of the tongue. By this member, at any rate, is the sin committed which hath never forgiveness. God mercifully salt our tongues with grace!

3. Let us now look at the *circumstances* out of which our text grew. I have already explained these circumstances last Wednesday, and again this morning, hence now but a passing reference will suffice. The Lord had healed him “possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb” (v. 22); the majority of the common people admitted, on the strength of that miracle, that he was the Messiah. “Is not this the son of David?” say they. This went against the Pharisees; it stained their glory, cut against their selfish interests, and then the native enmity of their hearts came out thus: “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils” (v. 24). The Saviour delivered several arguments to show the impossibility of their charge against him (vv. 25–30), and then solemnly asserted the following, “Wherefore (indicating the connection with the foregoing)...the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” “I say unto you,” says Christ, “I, who will be your judge in the great day, I say unto you, that by knowingly, deliberately, and out of pure malice asserting that my works are done by union with the devil, when they are done (as you well know) by the Spirit of God, this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” Judged by the circumstances whence the text arose, it would indicate the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to be “the expression of the blasphemy which was in their hearts, namely, vituperation or vile abuse of the Son of God, and that in full knowledge and out of absolute malice against him.” The abuse was against the Holy Ghost, since it was by him that Christ, as mediator, performed his wondrous works. Mark sets this forth without any ambiguity, “But he that shall blaspheme

against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:30).

4. *Is there no sense in which this sin can still be committed?* I fear the answer must be “Yes there is, undoubtedly,” for the scriptures are for all time, and not merely for the period and people long since past. It would appear that this sin arises generally, if not always, from people who, like ourselves, have made some profession of religion! It was so, at any rate, in the first case, for who were greater sticklers for a religion than the Pharisees? And who were greater enemies to Christ and his true people than they? Who indeed? Profession may be of the public kind, as by baptism and joining some local church; or in a tacit way, that is, by meeting with God’s people at prayer meetings, preaching services, and generally being known as one among the people of God. Among this general profession as a whole are a people who also *possess* what they either publicly or tacitly profess; and, without being harsh, one is justified in saying there are biblical reasons for fearing that only a very small portion of the bulk of professors of any kind of religious faith have the “root of the matter” in them. If tares and wheat grow together (and Christ said so), it is to be suspected that tares are in every field. Happy man who has a godly jealousy over himself lest he should prove a tare!

From the ranks of profession arise the people who commit this sin, this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This sin does not, perhaps, come about all at once, there may be stages thereto. Without pretending to anything approaching the prerogative of the Almighty, namely, power to read the heart, yet there are a few things which may lawfully be taken as indicating persons to be in a very solemn state and on the high way to committing this terrible sin if they have not already done so.

(a) *Irreverent language of God, or to God, when knowingly and maliciously spoken*, is a very solemn mark against one. This vituperation is fairly prevalent in some quarters. What does not fit in with certain religious preachers and hearers stirs up their enmity to an awful degree, and the most malicious things are spoken by such which, by their very profession and attendance at so-called means of grace, they must know is wrong. Yet they do it, and will do it, deliberately and persistently, against the rebukes of their conscience and the word of God.

What do many say of the work of the Spirit in a sinner's soul? What does it all mean when preachers and hearers, who profess to be born of the Spirit, simply hate and abominate the workings and teachings of the Spirit of God in a sinner's heart? A soul is truly convicted of sin, is made to mourn heartily, goes in darkness for months, lying under the law's condemnation. This soul is trying to seek for mercy but finds none, grieves over his felt depravity before God and is unable to rest in the mere and bare notion of the truths of the scriptures. In due time this soul is so blessed of the Spirit as to enjoy felt forgiveness of sins, and thereby is made to separate from all *form* for the love of the *power*.

Now what do the majority of both speakers and hearers say of that person? Who has not heard their vituperation? "Such an one is mad," say they. "He lives by feelings," says another, while a third cries, "He is always miserable," yet others of the same fraternity will say, "I do not want a religion like so and so," naming him or her as the case may be. Such know very well that their religion never cost them one night's wakefulness, one hour's godly sorrow for sin, and that not yet have they ever had any felt and enjoyed revelation of Christ or his truth in their heart. Their peace is quiet enough, being dead; their conscience firm enough, never having been stabbed by the Holy Ghost; their whole religion from beginning to end lying in the wisdom of men and not in the power of God. And yet from these persons will come the vilest abuse, the most savage but oblique knocks, and all for one reason, which they know quite well: "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

This persecution of the true family of God out of enmity, and malice, by Pharisees, Cains, and dead, dry Calvinists, is bidding fair, unless grace prevent, to terminate in this eternal sin; for slander, abuse of God's people, because of their loyalty and uprightness to truth, is slander against the good Spirit of God. Such may well tremble unless, indeed, they are already given up to blindness and hardness of heart; many such are aptly described as being "past feeling," that is, they have lost the very capacity to feel the solemn truth of God. People will not (unless raving mad and lost to all sense of common decency) openly blaspheme the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit, yet thousands are doing it constantly in abusing the saints of God. What is done to the member is done to the head of the body.

(b) *Knowledge, yes, such as commit this sin have knowledge*, but it is of that kind which “puffeth up.” They swell out with great swelling words of vanity as to what they have done for the Lord, and for this person and the other; how that such and such a matter would have come to nothing but for their wisdom, skill, and charity. Give these a text, it matters not what sort, and such is their knowledge that they can preach upon it within five minutes. The hearers come because form binds them, not because they hunger to hear for their souls’ profit; and indeed, they know far more than any ordinary or extraordinary mortal could tell them. They know all about God’s election of a people to be saved, and they know right well that they are of that number. They know all about the covenant made between the Trinity in Unity, with everything it contains, and will sing most confidently:

Come, saints, and sing in sweet accord,
 With solemn pleasure tell:
 The covenant made with David’s Lord,
 In all things, ordered well.

But have they ever had that personal election sealed home to their hearts? If so, malice and abuse of God’s truth, ways, and people would be turned out. Have such ever had the covenant made a covenant of *life* in their hearts? If so, humility, tender fear of God, holy sobriety, and love to his glory as the first thing, would be in evidence. So one might name every truth of the gospel, as the incarnation of the Son of God, his holy life, vicarious death, his precious blood.

But the one great and all-important point is this: has the Holy Ghost taught one these things, or is the knowledge of them notional, educational by teachers, preachers, parents, or natural religion, of which we all are full? This empty yet pride-filling knowledge will fill chapels with hearers and churches with members; there they may remain for years too, and die and be buried as godly people, but “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” But in some cases the time comes when they “forsake the assembling of themselves together,” and those who once sang the loudest of the doctrines of grace will unite with Arminians, who hate the doctrines of truth, and if spoken to upon the matter the serpent hisses from their breasts! The forsaking of godly assemblings is the first outward mark of something being radically wrong in the heart. Then, generally, it may be, and will

be (if God prevents not), such go from one stage to another until they get firmly seated in the seat of the scorner, and “tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). They first ignore the ways of God (because of inward hate to him), then go on by terrible stages until they do despite to the Spirit of grace, and how far short, if at all, of committing this eternal sin that is, the day will declare! (Read the whole section Heb. 10:26–30).

None who fall into this sin of blasphemy against the Spirit ever get out of it, and none who fear God with a broken and contrite heart, and tremble at his solemn word, ever get into it. God has given some solemn tokens in this life against mockers who do so out of a knowing, deliberately hateful heart: “It will be a fearful thing to fall (out of the pulpit and pew) into the hands of the living God,” of whom it is said, “Vengeance belongeth unto me. I will recompense, saith the Lord.” May we never know *that!* Some of this class of people have been sent raving mad, some have died in terrible convulsions, others have rushed to eternity by their own hand, and not a few have died with filthy diseases too revolting almost for nurses to attend to, and thus have ended their mortal career under the manifested curse of a holy God. And where it is not marked in this life, eternity will prove that not one mocker of truth and truth-loving people, who has died as a mocker, has escaped the fiery indignation of God. As some of God’s people have died under the most ravishing views by faith of the Son of God and eternal glory, so some of Satan’s poor religious dupes have died under the most fearful tokens of the wrath of God most holy. Right knowledge of the truth humbles, empties of self, leads to believing, confession, and to love, thence to obedience to the gospel. But with head knowledge only, there is pride, self-importance, nothing of living power in the soul; no power constraining, humbling, making one to repent, to loath self, and repent in dust and ashes before God; no power to receive Jesus Christ nor truly to seek him. The sow washed can and will turn to its wallowing in the mire, but not so the sheep.

(c) One more thing may be mentioned here as a very dark sign. I refer to *the deliberate, hateful, persistent attempts to hinder the gospel and its good effects upon others*. Where this is done out of spite, in knowledge of what one is doing, it places that person

perilously near this solemn doom, if, indeed, it is not the actual committal of that sin. It is worthy of careful notice that in Luke, where this sin is mentioned, the immediate connection is: "And when they shall bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:10–12). Compare this with Acts 3 and 4. Peter, "fastening his eyes upon him (the lame man) with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then said Peter, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." It was so, for "immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength," and he, leaping up, walked with them into the temple, "walking, and leaping, and praising God." Peter makes it abundantly clear to the multitude that it was not the holiness or power of him or John that made the man walk, but very powerfully preaches unto them Christ (Acts 3:12–26).

Then the same old story has to be told: up came the religious leaders and teachers of that age, "being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." And in order to show their *love*, their *Christian* spirit (who does not hear this talk today from the haters of Christ's truth?), "they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day." The next day the apostles are duly set before the rulers, elders, and scribes, and, in fulfilment exactly of the Saviour's word in Luke 12:11–12 ("The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye shall say"), we read, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost," made his glorious defence and preaches Christ of Nazareth to them, and pointedly, faithfully says, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." What follows? Mark the following points: "They took knowledge of them," and knew "they had been with Jesus." And beholding the healed man standing before them, "they could say nothing against it." Next, they have a conference among themselves, to slander another not there to defend himself, with this as the subject of debate, "What shall we do to these men? for that a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in

Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But what we cannot *deny*, we can *hate*, and do, and so let us threaten them that they speak no more in this name." And so they did, but God's servants say, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Gladly would these *dear, nice, kind, religious* leaders have laid the stripes on their backs and the stones on their hearts, but they could "find nothing how they might punish them because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done." Now here was opposition to the Holy Ghost in the preaching of the gospel, and that not ignorantly, but knowingly and deliberately out of pure malice to truth. They could not deny good was done, but fought their best (or worst) against it with their eyes wide open.

The days of the apostles are over, but God has his own servants yet, and those he has sent he gives them of his Spirit, in measure, to preach the gospel of Christ, and he owns them and blesses them in the work. This is the sure signal for opposition from the religious leaders and their formal followers, who oppose with craft, cunning and "conferences among themselves" to stop the good work. In fact, such is their enmity to God's order and *applied* truth that they will stop at nothing to render void a servant of God in his testimony and work. Whoever we fight against, if we must fight at all, let it never be a servant or child of God; to poke our dirty fingers into the apple of God's eye is to do what God will be certain to punish. This sin, which still flourishes among professors, to the great grief of the godly in Zion, where done in full knowledge and in spite against the truth, is very close to the sin which shall never be forgiven, if it is not the sin itself in one of its varied forms.

All such professors rolled into one, with all their malignity, their cunning, their crafty counsels with one another, can never do a servant or child of God one grain of real harm, nor hinder truly the gospel, but as overruled by God will be made a great blessing. Yet the guilt of running deliberately against the Holy Ghost, in the ministry, is theirs. Such will hurt themselves, not the object of their hate. The same hate is seen where the virgin birth of Christ is denied and the full work of the Spirit in Christ's human nature and the plenary inspiration of the word. In short, whatever is revealed in the scriptures and is known in their conscience as right and true, is opposed by these false professors simply out of hatred and anger because it condemns their

practice, or hurts their pride, or hits their envy and jealousy. Such an one is truly in as solemn a state as he can possibly be.

5. *There is something mysterious as to why it should be against the Holy Ghost and not Christ.* “Who shall speak against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.” “All manner of sin and blasphemy” against the Son of man shall, when one is brought to repentance and faith in Christ, be forgiven him experimentally. I do not feel able to unravel this mystery, but it may be remarked firstly, that it is not because the Holy Ghost is greater than the Lord Jesus Christ, for the God of the scriptures is revealed as subsisting in three persons, each of whom is equal in nature and perfections—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. Not three Gods, but three persons who are equally God. What is the Father so is the Son, and so is the Holy Spirit, unto whom may we ever be helped to ascribe equal honour and glory for the hope of our salvation.

Secondly, there may be something in the phrase, “Son of man,” which is recorded both by Matthew and Luke. “Son of man,” as applied to Christ Jesus, is a phrase denoting his humiliation, as thus: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” During his humiliation his deity was largely veiled: “*A root out of a dry ground.*” To speak against the Son of man in the form of a servant, while his Godhead was very largely veiled, is one thing; but to speak with contempt and malice of the Holy Spirit in his clear revelations of him as Son of God is another. In the resurrection of Christ, in which the Holy Ghost wrought (Rom. 8:11), he is “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:4), and the Holy Ghost has given the fullest attestation to his deity and proper Sonship and divine mission and work. To speak against the Son of God out of malice and contempt, with scorn and hate, now the Holy Spirit has given such infallible proofs of what he was, and is, and did, is not to speak merely against the Son of God, but it is to blaspheme the testimony of the Spirit.

To speak contemptuously, maliciously, in the face of knowledge to the contrary, against the deity and Sonship of Christ, will be found eventually to differ very little, if any, from “speaking against the Holy Ghost.” To speak blasphemously against the Spirit’s testimony of the Son of God is not less than to speak against his work by Christ when Jesus by the “finger of

God” (Luke 11:20) cast out the devil. The Spirit speaks plainly of the eternal, unique, relationship of the Son with his Father; he thus reveals the fullest glory it is possible for the Son to have: “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” The charge for which Christ died was “because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God,” (John 5:18) and the Holy Spirit shows unmistakably that this was blessedly true of Christ. For at his resurrection the good Spirit, jointly with his Father, raised him from the dead, and most blessedly testified of him that he was the Son of God, equal with God, because he was God. To pour scorn and carnal objections upon this plain testimony of the Holy Spirit, to ridicule it and say it is a matter of no importance, in what does this differ from the people who in his day said he was in league with Satan? To speak against the Son of man in his humiliation is one thing; to speak against him under the full blaze of glory as revealed by the Spirit will be found to be a most serious and solemn matter. God help us well to weigh this thought in the light of the Spirit’s teaching!

Thirdly, we would stress the word by Mark, who, speaking by the Spirit, declares the sin against the Holy Spirit to be “because they said, He hath an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:30). This is attributing to Christ, in the face of clear evidence to the contrary, out of absolute spite against him, unity with the most unclean spirit as implied in the filthy and disgusting name Beelzebub, or Dung-god! As one has said, “This view of the matter is important, as implying a terrific aggravation of the sin committed by these Pharisees in representing the wonderful acts of God as operations not of the devil only, but of Beelzebub, a name which, though applied to Satan, is specially insulting, as it identifies Christ with the old Fly-god of the ancient enemies to Israel (the Philistines) and the Dung-god, into which this idol had been changed by the bitterness of Jewish controversial satire.”

6. *Godly souls may ask, have we committed this terrible sin?* In general it may be said that none of God’s people can commit this sin unto death, not because their nature is not equal to it, for what others have done they, possessing the same nature, can do, but because the Lord, in his care of his people, will not leave them to commit this sin. In particular it may be said that they who have not committed this sin, being regenerated of God, are marked by hatred to all sin, specially to such a sin as the text

brings before us. They hate it, they pray to hate it more, they are sorry they cannot hate it always, fully, deeply, and universally, that is, in all its branches. A hatred to sin, as sin, not because of its punishment, is a good mark of grace in the soul, as is also confession of sin before God in general, that is, acknowledgment of sin done by one and in one. Also particular confession, that is, special sins, will be dealt with by such, and mourned over before God from time to time as grace melts the heart. Supplications before God for repentance to be granted, for godly sorrow for sin to be felt and pardon bestowed, surely tells that such a suppliant has not committed this sin unto death. Reception of the words of Christ (John 17:8) in a warm heart, because they are given you to have as your own possession, is a mark of grace. For it is a falling under the authority of his truth with meekness, willingness, and counting it your greatest honour to be subject to his truth and not to argue how near one can drive to the precipice of disobedience without going over it, as thousands are doing today.

Spiritual desires for separation in spirit first; then, because of that inward separation, an outward separation from the profane and the religious camps, the semi-religious combines one may say, is another proof of the reality of indwelling grace. And until separation in some good measure is manifested there must be doubt as to the reality of the work being of God. Leaving *form*-people for *living*-people, the external for the internal, the shell for the kernel, the husk for the wheat, the *respectable* religious for the sinners, harlots, and publicans, and finding such your spiritual companions—this is a grand mark of being free from this “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.”

Once more, to have feeling enough to be worried about this point, to be exercised about it, to pray over it and against it, to seek God for evidence from him that one has not committed it: this alone proves such are yet out of this hole of despair. “Past feeling” characterises the sinner who has fallen into this sin. It does not worry him because he has not enough sensibility to worry; nothing godly is a worry to him; he is either hardened through the deceitfulness of open sin, or blinded and hardened under, and by, a dead formal religion: in either case he is “past feeling.” Solemn state truly. A saint of God may have a hard heart, but he at his worst state is not “past feeling,” because he feels his hardness, and grieves in spirit because of it. Further, he

would not have it hard, and he cannot make it soft, but he does cry to one who can and does. "For God maketh my heart soft," said holy Job, and so say all the family of grace.

I have trespassed upon your time and, perhaps, patience too, but even now one feels he has scarcely touched this solemn theme. Having regard to the fact that this is the only sin which hath never forgiveness not in this world nor in the world to come, one has tried to say a few things about it in the interests of truth. Others with more grace than I have could do much better, I am sure, on this terrible subject, but I have done what I could, as helped, and now in closing: *Honour the Holy Spirit!* Reverence him as God, in his teachings, all through his word, in the work of his grace in your hearts and others. In these things I would identify myself with the weakest of you, for if left to ourselves what are we? The secret of all real religion is "Christ in us the hope of glory;" the heart affected mightily in addition to the head; vital communications with and from Christ under the unction of the Holy Ghost, and all to the glory of the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.