

Gospel Reconciliation

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or

Christ's Trumpet of Peace to the World

Jeremiah Burroughs

Edited by Don Kistler



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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:19–20

The apostle Paul, who was the penman of this and the previous epistle, was a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ in the world—a glorious instrument to publish the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He was one of the most famous ambassadors who was ever on the earth, one who honored Jesus Christ as much as any man did of whom we have ever read or heard. All his care was to magnify, yes, indeed, to glorify Jesus Christ. The very name of Christ was as sugar in his mouth, and rolled up and down under his tongue. He felt that he had tasted much of the sweetness of the grace of God in Christ, and he labored greatly to make this known unto

others so that they might likewise experience this sweetness. And in these two verses there is as much set forth of the grace of God in the gospel as I know in any two verses together in all the Book of God.

We have here set out to us the doctrine of reconciliation between God and man, the apostle's commission to declare this doctrine of reconciliation, and the faithful discharge of his commission. The first two are in verse 19; the third is in verse 20.

As for verse 19 we have here, first, the doctrine of reconciliation: "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." And in that you have these two things:

First, the doctrine of reconciliation set down more generally, namely, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

Second, an instance of one special great work of God: "In reconciling the world unto Himself."

We shall make an entrance into the first of these and so proceed, starting with the doctrine of reconciliation set down more generally: "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

This word "reconciliation" notes and implies that there was a formal breach between God and us. We cannot understand what it is to be reconciled, unless we beforehand know something about the breach which this reconciliation must make up. It implies that there was an enmity between man and God; for if two are reconciled, then, certainly, it implies that once there was an enmity between them. *Conciliari* is to bring into favor, but *reconciliari* is to bring into favor again those who have been in favor before, and between whom there has been a breach. Therefore, to bring into favor again is, in plain terms, reconciliation. And in the opening of this

doctrine, therefore, there are these particulars that plainly lie before us in the text; for I will go no further in the opening of the doctrine of reconciliation than to that which you have lying obviously and plainly before you in the words.

First, that which is implied: there was a blessed union at first between God and man, but this was broken; and there was an enmity after that union between God and man. I put these two together: after the first union that was between God and man there was an enmity between God and man.

Second, there is yet a way to have this breach made up. There is a possibility for man, who is at enmity with God, to be reconciled.

Third, I shall open to you wherein this reconciliation consists, what that reconciliation is which the text speaks of and which the gospel tenders to us.

Fourth, I shall show the principal cause of this, how this reconciliation began. It was God Himself who began with us; we did not begin with Him to make peace. God first began with us, or there would never have peace been made between Him and man.

Fifth, I shall show in whom this reconciliation is made: it is in Jesus Christ, which indeed is the principal thing of all. And that is where the mystery of the gospel lies. And when we come to that, we shall open the mystery of this reconciliation.

Sixth, further, from what time this reconciliation has been. The text says, "God was in Christ." It was not only made at the present, but there was a work between God and Christ concerning the reconciliation of man from all eternity.

Seventh, who they are here who are said to be reconciled, that is, the world: "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

CHAPTER TWO

There was a Breach Made between God and Man after a Blessed Union

*I*n the first chapter we have much work cut out. Some of the particulars I will pass over very briefly, for my scope and drift is to open to you the evangelical part of this text and to insist especially on what is plainly expressed rather than to insist on what is implied. But we cannot treat what is expressed without treating a little of what is implied; therefore, let us look at a few lines of that, and so pass on.

That which is implied is that there is a breach made between God and us after a blessed union. There was at first a blessed union between God and mankind. God made man in a happy estate according to His own image, that is, in perfect holiness and righteousness. When He had made all other creatures, He made man as His chosen creature, and He stamped upon him His own image to the end that He might by man have His glory from all the other creatures that were made—that He might in this world have a creature which might be able to know Him,

worship Him, and serve Him, and to take notice of the luster of His glory that arose from all His other works, and to reflect this glory upon His face. And He made man a creature fit to do this work. Man was very happy in his first creation with this, that God made him, of all His creatures, fit for such a business to reflect His own glory upon His own face, and so to enjoy communion with Himself, which no creature in the world, except the angels which were in heaven, were capable of. And the Lord loved this creature and took delight in him; therefore it is observable in the last part of Genesis 1 that though, when He beheld all His other works, He only said that they were good, yet when the fixed day came wherein man was made the text says that “He saw everything that He had made, and behold it was *very* good.”

Observe that it was never said “very good” until the last day, until man was made. There is not this commendation of the works of God mentioned until He had made man. And the reason is indeed because the Lord did not take so much delight in all the works He had made in this world until He had made man. Man was the very complement of all the excellencies of God’s works; for indeed He was the end of all His works. He made all the other for man, and man for Himself. God has not His glory, I mean, not immediately from all His other works in the world, but only through man. And had it not been for man He would have lost the greatest part of His glory in the rest of His works. His glory passed from all the works that He made unto Him through man. Now, therefore, though the works that God made—the heaven, the earth, the seas, and the like—were good in themselves, yet what glory could God have had in all these? He could have no communion with these creatures after they were made, and these creatures could have no communion with Him. None of them could know God, take

any notice of God, or praise God actively. God is pure act, and He is not content with having His glory passively; but He must have His glory actively. It is true, all His creatures were made as an instrument in tune, but there was none to play on. And though there was never so much of the glory of God in all the creatures in the world, yet, if man had not been made, none could have sounded forth this glory of God. Those creatures would have been dumb in that respect, like an instrument that cannot of itself sound forth any music unless there was someone to play it. And so it is here: God had made all other creatures very good, and there was in them matter of God's praise; but now, to the end that this praise and glory of God may be sounded forth, He brought in man and gave him skill to praise the name of God in all these creatures, and in this God delighted very much.

Thus there was a most blessed union, and a wonderful delight between God and man at first. But, the truth is, this union was soon broken, and man in a short time came to be (next to the devils) the most deadly enemy that God had, even though there was a most blessed union between God and man at first. Adam could walk and converse with God, as he did for a while; yet Adam sinned against God and turned into a most disparate enemy against God, even he himself, and all his posterity. Therefore you will observe in the story where the fall of man is set forth that, as soon as Adam had sinned, the voice of God, which he heard in the garden, became terrible to him. And he immediately sought to hide himself; he was conscious that he had made God his enemy. He looked upon God as his enemy, and so fled from Him as from an enemy. Oh, what a change was here of man's condition! What a sad thing this was: that God had no creature in all the world to know Him, fear Him, serve Him, and love Him, and in whom He could delight

and have communion but man, and that man should presently turn into a rebel and enemy to God.

He was such an enemy that God looked on him as one having a most opposite nature to Him; and man looked on God as his enemy and flew from Him as from an enemy. So that God was fain, as it were, to call after Him, "Adam, where art thou?" This is the woeful fruit of sin, even of the first sin, of the fall of our first parents; and since the world began, since that very time, this man, this Adam, has begotten none but enemies unto God. And, if there is any truth in the Word of God, this is certain: there was never any child of Adam but was born an enemy unto God. The Scripture is as clear in this as in anything. I might name an abundance of texts for it, but for brevity's sake I shall omit most of them. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God" (Romans 5:10). Certainly if any men in the world were not enemies unto God, they are those who are reconciled afterward; but the apostle speaks of himself and of all other Christians who are reconciled unto God. He says that they were enemies unto Him. This may be said of every man, woman, and child in the world, that he is an enemy unto God.

Such enemies are every one of us unto God naturally that there is an antipathy between our hearts and Him; and the enmity of antipathy is the greatest. It is not an enmity occasioned by some ill carriage on one act. For example, between two men, though they were great friends before, yet there may be some miscarriage so that they may be as enemies for a while; but that is not all. The enmity that is on man's part against God is in his very nature. It is true that a sinful act brought it in first, and made a breach between God and man, but that is not all. It went further. There was, by this sin begotten in the heart of man, an antipathy, a natural antipathy between him and God. The poison of a toad in the body of a man is not more opposite.

There is not a greater enmity to the nature of man than enmity of the nature of man unto God Himself.

Two sheep may fight one against another by occasion and be as enemies one with another, but two sheep can never be at enmity with one another as the wolf and the lamb are, for the enmity of these two animals is natural. Their natures are opposite one to another. So the heart of man is opposite unto God even naturally. And know this: there is in man's nature not only a hatred of God, but a deadly hatred.

Perhaps you think you are free from this; but, certainly, this is in every one of your hearts naturally, even in those who have the best natures in the world, as you call them. There is in their hearts a hatred, no, a deadly hatred against God.

But you will say, "God forbid! What, hate God?" See that in Scripture, where the apostle reckons up the evil of those who were in their natural condition, he says that "they were haters of God" (Romans 1:30). And what the apostle there says of them, he intends of all; for it is his scope in that place to show our natural condition, and that therefore we cannot be justified by any works of our own, but it must be by faith in Christ because we are by nature haters of God. And in the Second Commandment you have that sin expressed even of those who seem to be the greatest lovers of God, who would be thought to love God more than any people, who devise pictures to worship God by, and bestow much cost upon them. They say, "It is for the honor of God." Who would not think that these men loved God exceedingly? Yet, though these men may be thought to be lovers of God, there is no commandment in which the breakers of it are said to be haters of God but in this commandment: "He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him" (Exodus 20:5), that is, upon those

who, however they pretend to love Him in their false worship, yet they hate Him.

So certainly there is a hatred, yes, a deadly hatred in the heart of man by nature against God. But you will say, "How does that appear?" Or, "Wherein does the deadly hatred of God consist in this?"

When one man hates another so as to wish him dead, he wishes him out of the way. He wishes that he were not. Such a kind of hatred there is in every man's heart naturally, which I will make plain as follows. The very nature of God is holiness itself. And if God should be less holy than He is, He should lose His very being. Or if God should be less just than He is, He would lose His life and cease to be. Now I put this question to you, to you who are wicked men, who are unconverted: have you not sometimes a secret wish within your hearts that God were not so holy as He is? Do you not wish in your hearts that God were not so just as He is, that He did not hate sin as He does? Do you not wish that God were not so holy and just as He is, even because you might have the more liberty in your way of sin, that you might have more freedom in fulfilling the lust of the flesh? Is not this in your hearts oftentimes?

See then what it comes to: it is as much as if one should say, "My heart is so set upon such and such at last that I would rather God should cease to be God than I should not have liberty to enjoy that lust." This is the very plain English of it. You may not come to that height to say so, in so many words (for I suppose none of you to be so abominably wicked), or ever come to that height of impiety as to say plainly with your mouths, "I love such a lust so dearly that I would rather God should not be God than I lose my lust." But you are to know that there is a language in your actions as well as your words. And God can

understand the language of your actions as well as the expressions of your mouths.

Now, it is apparent that when a man loves his lust so well as to wish that he may have the more liberty for the enjoyment of it, he could secretly wish that God were not so infinitely holy and just as He is. Certainly there is this in it: in effect he desires and wishes that God might rather cease to be than that he might have to leave his lust. And is not this a deadly hatred? You so love your lust that you have a deadly hatred against God, whose holiness and justice you know to be infinitely set against it. Therefore, for the better enjoyment of your lust, you wish that God were neither so holy nor just as He is; which is, in effect, to wish that He were not God. For if He should cease to be holy, or become less holy and less just than He is, He would cease to be God.

And truly, if we rightly understood our own natures in this particular, we would realize that there is nothing which will break the heart of a man more than this. What can break the heart of man more than to sit down and consider, "I am an enemy unto God, and I have been in enmity against God all my days. Therefore, what can I expect but that God should be an enemy unto me everlastingly." This is that which will strike down the proudest heart in the world. And, let me tell you, until you come to see sin like this, you do not see it to any purpose. But though this argument could take up my whole treatise, yet, because I mention it to make way to that which remains, and which I principally aim at in the doctrine of reconciliation, I shall therefore pass it over.

CHAPTER THREE

There Is a Way to Make Peace between God and Sinful Man

*W*ould it not now be joyful news to you to hear of a possibility for God to be reconciled to you? You see, there is an enmity in your hearts to God, and not only an enmity but a most deadly and desperate one. I could show you abundance of particulars of this enmity, but the main thing that I aim at is only to open the doctrine of reconciliation. Therefore, if you apprehend this truth of God, and if God has darted it into your conscience, will not the doctrine of reconciliation be acceptable to you? Oh, it would! And it is acceptable unto those who fear God and rightly apprehend themselves as enemies unto Him. But I fear lest, while I am treating the doctrine of reconciliation between God and you, you would not apprehend the excellency of it, and not relish the sweetness of it.

Therefore, if I have said anything that seems to be terrible to you in my other treatises, if I have shown you what an evil and dangerous condition you are in naturally, and how liable

to the wrath of God and the torments of hell, where the worm dies not and the fear goes not out, it is all to this end: that you might the better relish this blessed and sweet doctrine of reconciliation between God and your souls. This is that then which we shall begin with as the first sound of the blessed silver trumpet of the gospel, namely:

DOCTRINE. There is a way to make up a peace between God and sinful man.

God has not left mankind, who has sunk himself into such a depth of misery—I say, God has not left them in an irrecoverable or irreconcilable state. The Lord here professes to you that He is willing to be reconciled unto you. Yes, we shall afterward show that He entreats you to be reconciled.

But here is the first sound of the trumpet of the gospel, and blessed are they who hear this joyful sound, namely, that there is a possibility of being reconciled. The Lord is content to enter into parley with His enemies, for God might have cast them off forever, and never so much as parley with them, just as He has done with the angels who sinned, against whom He was so provoked that He resolved within Himself—and He has kept His resolution since the beginning of the world, and He will keep it unto all eternity—that He will not so much as enter into parley with those creatures or be reconciled with them upon any terms. Suppose a man is so fallen out with another that if one should come to speak about terms of peace he cannot endure to hear of them. “No,” says he, “I will never enter into treaty with him so long as I live” about it. In that same way, God will never enter into treaty with the angels. He will not hear of any terms of reconciliation, but is resolved to avenge Himself upon them to all eternity.

Therefore the apostle says, "They are reserved in chains to the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). But now, Lord, what shall become of man? Poor man might well fear when he hears what God has resolved against the angels. He has cause enough to shake at that, for indeed, man is a far poorer and meaner and more wretched creature than those angels are.

Let us suppose that a great prince is offended with some nobleman in his court, yes, even for his first offense, that all the men in the world cannot persuade that prince so much as to vouchsafe to hearken to any terms of reconciliation. If some meaner officer, some poor groom, shall have offended the king and provoked his wrath, and he hears that though the king's chief favorite, one who was near to him, who was always in his preference, only offended him once and yet the king would never hearken to any means of pacification, surely this meaner man would soon think to himself, "Lord, what will become of me? Is there any hope that there shall be a parley between the king and me?" Certainly this poor man would even be ready to have his heart sink within him, and sit down altogether overwhelmed with fear and despair.

So, indeed, should we all have done upon our reasoning within ourselves concerning God's dealing with the fallen angels. Had we not had this glorious and blessed sound of the gospel, and hopes of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, we would have all sunk down into the bottomless gulf of despair and concluded certainly against ourselves that there can be no peace between God and us, we being such enemies unto Him as we are by nature. But though this is beyond our thoughts as far as the heaven is above the earth, and though it could never enter into the heart of man that ever God would parley with poor fallen man after so great an enmity begotten by sin, yet know that this is the message

that is come from heaven, even from God Himself: He is contented to parley with you. Yes, He is so contented that He Himself has sent ambassadors to us to entreat us to be reconciled. But of that, hereafter.

God, I say, is content to enter into treaty with man concerning a reconciliation and making peace between Him and their souls; for that indeed is the very scope of the gospel. Let me dwell here to inquire why the Lord would be willing to enter into this treaty with mankind. The truth is that it is an unsearchable depth. We cannot imagine any reason why the Lord should rather choose to parley with us, and to treat concerning terms of peace with us, than with the angels.

There is one explanation which we may have in our thoughts. If God did not reconcile Himself to man and save him, He would lose His whole creation. He did not lose all the angels when they fell, but if God should not provide a way for man to be reconciled the whole kind of that creature would be utterly lost. Now the Lord will not cast away the whole kind of such an excellent creature as man is. But, the truth is, these are but guesses at this reason in choosing to treat with us about salvation, and not with the angels.

But the main thing is that God has ways to glorify Himself that we know not of, in reconciling Himself to mankind. We know that God has glorious intentions in this work, but what these are we shall never know thoroughly until we come to heaven. And that indeed will be the very work of heaven itself, to be praising God to all eternity for that great act of His, namely His willingness to be reconciled to lost man rather than the fallen angels. We shall know some reasons for that afterward, for God does things according to the counsel of His will. And there is nothing He does but He has a great deal of reason, for which we must adore Him, though we cannot now

fully understand. For the present, let me hint this unto you, and let the consideration of but this much affect your hearts. Oh, should we be sent to preach to the devils such a point as this is, or to the angels in hell, and say, “The Lord has kept this counsel from you almost this six thousand years, and His ways towards you have been so as if He would never enter parley with you. But now God has revealed His will towards you so that He is content to enter into a treaty with you about the things that concern your peace, and the reconciling of you unto Himself,” what a message would this be to them, do you think? But this never was, nor ever shall be preached unto them.

If God should send this message to the damned in hell, and say to them, “The Lord is content to enter into a parley with you about reconciling Himself unto you,” what a message would this be to them! But this cannot be. This is only for those who are alive here in this world, to that part of the children of men who are living upon the earth; unto them only can it be preached that there is a possibility of reconciliation between God and them. Truly the consideration of such a possibility is that which may satisfy the heart of man, let the terms be what they will.

Oh, if it is possible that God may be reconciled, I will never inquire about the terms out of fear that the hardness of them should discourage me! Oh, let the terms be what they will, this is the most acceptable news; this is the best tidings to my soul—more acceptable than if I were told that I had a thousand worlds given unto me—even this that I hear, that there is a possibility of reconciliation between God and myself! This may serve to be some prop to support and keep any troubled conscience from despair, even the very reading of this, though still they are unsure of God’s willingness to make up the peace, but realize it is possible that they may have it. No

angel in heaven, no man in the world, does or can know to the contrary, but that it is possible for you, for such a sinner as you are, to come to be reconciled.

And does this begin a little to stir your heart but to read that the condition of man is not desperate, but there is a possibility of his being reconciled? Do you believe because of this? Then (as Christ said unto Nathaniel) "You shall see greater things than these" (John 1:50). So, if your heart begins to be affected by this, you shall, before we have done with this subject, read greater things of the counsel of God about His willingness to be reconciled unto the children of men.

Before I pass, let me speak this one word about this point. Let us take heed that we do not turn this grace of God that we hear of this day to the increase of our more fearful condemnation, or make our condemnation far more dreadful than the condemnation of the devil is, because we have more means afforded us for our delivery than ever they had. For if we look not to it, it may prove that our condemnation may be more dreadful than the condemnation of the devil. And therefore you have need, when you hear anything of this doctrine of reconciliation, or of a possibility of being reconciled unto God, to lift up your hearts to God and desire that the reading of this blessed doctrine may not prove to the increase of your condemnation.

There is no such thing preached to the devils. Therefore, if I do not come and accept the terms of reconciliation, I shall be in a worse case than the devils. It can never be charged upon them that God was willing to be reconciled and they would not; but it may be said of all wicked and ungodly men who live under the sound of the gospel, and so continue in their wickedness and die in it. This will be the charge that will lie upon them another day. God will say to them, "You did indeed hear that you were naturally enemies to Me; yet I manifested in My

gospel that I would enter into terms of peace with you, but you refused it and slighted it and scorned it.”

What can possibly provoke the heart of man so much as this, that when he has his enemy who has deeply offended him at an advantage, he should yet offer terms of peace to him, and yet his enemy goes away scorning, slighting, and condemning him. Truly, thus do wicked men who live under the light of the gospel, when the ministers of the gospel come and preach peace and reconciliation to them, telling them that God is willing to be at peace with them, that He is willing to treat and parley with them about the business of salvation. They go away, and the language of their actions is this: “Well, we will shift as well as we can for ourselves. We are resolved to have our ways of sin, and to have our satisfaction in this and the other lust.” God forbid that this should be in the heart of anyone who casts his eyes on this book.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reconciliation Opened

1. By it God's enmity is taken away
2. The enmity on the soul's part is taken away
3. God receives the soul into entire love
4. By it you come to be in league and covenant with God
5. The soul is perfectly reconciled
6. This reconciliation is everlasting
7. It continues notwithstanding all your sins
8. The devil's accusations shall never make God your enemy again

*I*n the third place, I am going to open a little further this grace of God, the doctrine of reconciliation. It is a most blessed and sweet doctrine, especially in these times wherein there are so many combustions abroad in the world, wherein we hear of wars and rumors of wars, yes, of wars near to us, even in our own land, our bowels. What can be more acceptable in such times as these than to hear of reconciliation?

Now, things are grown to such a height, and there is such a deadly hatred (for, let me tell you, there was never such a deadly hatred in a nation between one party and another as there is now), that it is boiled up to the highest point. Poison may be boiled up to such a height that it may be death to

touch it. So the poison and rage of our adversaries are boiled up to the greatest height. But though we are not able to conceive that there can be a reconciliation between them and us, yet there may be a possibility of a reconciliation between God and us; and the hearing of the doctrine of reconciliation may quiet and support our hearts against the fear and trouble that we have in these times, wherein we have nothing but rumors of wars round about us, yes, in the midst of all these miseries which we hear of, as the effect of these unnatural broils that are among us.

Now the doctrine may be opened in these several particulars:

1. That enmity which we have heard of before is all done away when God comes to be reconciled to a soul. All that enmity is then so removed that the ways of the Lord to a man are turned quite contrary to what they have formerly been. This I shall afterwards reveal when discussing this reconciliation more fully. But this is the first thing: the doing away of all that wrath and displeasure that was in the heart of God against the sinner, so that, if it were possible that you could but look into the heart of God, you would not see any remainder of that wrath and displeasure that was in Him because of sin. It is true that, if we consider God in all His workings together, from election to glorification, it will be hard to affirm that ever God should be in a way of enmity against His elect ones, because He always loved them. For, the truth is, though we conceive God's works by pieces, yet they are all one in Him. But if we would understand God aright, we must understand Him in relation to His creature and in relation to Himself. For as God is in Himself, it is impossible for us to understand Him; but we must understand Him in reference to His creatures. There we find that one excellency of God is cut into several pieces and parts; and that one act of God, which is His own being, is discovered in several ways of acting.

A great many mistakes about God are made when men draw consequences from what God is in Himself, and bring them to what God is in relation to His creature. And because they cannot reconcile these two, namely, what God is infinitely in Himself (which is above our apprehension) and what God is in His manifestation to the creature, they draw most absurd and vile consequences about God. Sometimes they look on God in Himself, and sometimes on God as He is to the creature; and not being able to distinguish, they greatly mistake the ways of God.

For example, if you would look upon God as He is in Himself, there are not two attributes in His essence. That which we call mercy and that which we call justice are one and the same in God. That which we call love and that which we call hatred in God are all one; but in us they are two things. In man, justice is one thing, power is another thing, patience is another thing, and love is another thing; but in God all these are but one infinite essence.

Regarding actions, sometimes we conceive of God acting one way and then another way—first acting in the way of His wrath and then in the way of His love. But God Himself is one pure act, and when we look upon God in Himself we can see Him as but absolutely one in His own nature. There are no such attributes as we speak of; it is but only according to man's capacity, according to the several ways of the manifestations of God's own infinite essence, and of the several actions of God. But when we look upon God in reference to the creature, we see God, as it were, divided.

For example, when the sun shines and the beams appear, if you put a green or blue or red glass between your eye and it, the reflection will appear blue, green, or red according to the color of the glass. Yet, in the meantime, the beams of sun are all one. Then take the same glass that is blue; if you can but make

it green the shining of the sun will be green too. All the variety is in the glass, not in the sun.

So God is the same forever; but according to the several conditions men are in, so are the workings of God towards that creature. For example, when man was in the state of innocence, he was, as it were, a white clear glass, and God shone there in a way of goodness and love to man. The same man fell and was dyed red by his sin. Let him be now presented unto God, and then the ways of God are bloody and full of wrath. Let this man again be converted unto God, and now the glass is changed and God represents Himself in another way, but He is still the same God; only according to the several ways of the creature, so are His several actions.

Therefore those who will speak of God as He is in Himself, who is but one act, are apt to lead you into abundance of errors because they are not able to manage their apprehensions of Him as He is in Himself. Therefore they draw such ill consequences about God. They will tell you that God is unchangeable, so how can you be under the wrath of God when He loves you from all eternity? Yes, the same God who can look upon the creature in one consideration with love may look upon the same creature in another consideration with hatred. "We converts (said the apostle) were the children of wrath as well as others by nature" (Ephesians 2:3). In that respect there was no difference between us and others.

I will but put this to these men: was there not a time when Jesus Christ was under God's wrath? Yet God loved His Son from all eternity. He always loved Him, yet there was a time when He was under the wrath of God, that is, Christ being presented unto God with our nature, with our sins, God's ways towards Him were (as we may say) in a red way. So we may understand that even those who are elect, God loving them from all eternity, may

yet be in a state of enmity unto God, as He works upon the creature according to the several considerations of it. So while he is walking contrary to God, God is also walking contrary to him. This is how you can see what this reconciliation is. This enmity is taken away. That is, before God shone on them through a red reflection, but now that is gone and He shines on them through a white glass. This dreadful wrath of His that is out against them, and that contrariety of God in His ways against them, is quite taken away. This is the first point.

2. Not only the enmity that is in God is done away, but the Lord also takes away the enmity on the soul's part; that is, you come by virtue of this reconciliation to be so overpowered by the Spirit of God that you have a heart in amity with God. At least that natural crossness and perverseness of your heart against God, whereby you hate God and that which is holy and spiritual, is taken away, and you have a frameable spirit, framed by God, and made willing to come in and submit, and you yield yourself to God. God puts a reconcilable spirit *in* you, as He Himself has a reconcilable spirit *towards* you.

3. There is a receiving into entire love: not only a ceasing of wrath and of the enmity that is in God against you, and a taking away of the enmity that is in you against God, but a receiving into entire love, and that mutually. God receives you into the love of a friend and you receive God into the love of a friend too, so that there was never such an entire friendship between one friend and another, after peace has been made between them, as there is now between God and your soul. And this is more than being barely pacified. For men who were at enmity one with another may possibly come to have the fierceness of their enmity taken away; yes, they may come to be so far reconciled that they will never do one another hurt. They will never

fight the one against the other as they formerly did. But, perhaps, for all this, they will never come to be entirely loving one to another. It may be that they will live as strangers one towards another. But whenever the soul comes to be reconciled to God, there is a thorough reconciliation. The enmity is not only taken away, but there is an entire love between God and the soul. You are made a friend to God and God becomes a friend to you.

4. In this reconciliation you come now to be in league with God. God and you come to shake hands one with another, yes, more than shake hands—you come to be one of His own people. God takes you into an everlasting covenant with Himself, and you take Him to be your God in an everlasting covenant likewise. When princes war one against another, there may be peace made, and they may lay down their grievances on both sides; but all this while they may not come into a league of friendship and amity one with another. But God is so reconciled to a soul that He enters into a league with the soul. He enters into a covenant.

5. When the Lord is reconciled to a soul, He is perfectly reconciled. We may give it that word, for, the truth is, it is such a reconciliation, it is so perfect, that there shall not remain the least grudge in the heart of God towards a reconciled man. It is true, on our side it is not so perfect, but on God's side it is so perfect a reconciliation that there shall not remain the least grudge in the heart of God against the creature, to cause any hurt to the creature.

6. Yes, such is the reconciliation that it is everlasting, such a reconciliation as shall never be breach made again, such a reconciliation as there shall never be a falling out again. And where was there ever such a peace made between one man and another? When was ever one man so reconciled to another that a man may say, "These two, who were at deadly enmity before,

are so reconciled that there will never again be any breach between them; they are so reconciled that all that ever can be done in the world shall never break the bond of friendship that is between them.”?

Such a reconcilment occurs between God and every believing soul at the first moment. When you first come to Jesus Christ, God shakes hands with you, enters into league with you, becomes a friend to you, and is so reconciled to you that nothing in the world shall ever break the atonement that is made between God and your soul. You shall see how God Himself expresses it in speaking to His church about this very word of reconciliation. He says, “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isaiah 54:10).

This Scripture, though spoken to the Church, is true of every believing soul. Do you think that mountains are firm? Many storms and tempests may be abroad, but all the storms of the world cannot remove the mountains. Look, says God, how firm and steady the mountains are; so firm shall My mercy be to you, and the covenant of My peace.

Has God had mercy on your soul, and has He been reconciled to you? Know, then, that it is such a reconciliation as is more stable and firm than the very mountains themselves. Oh, this is the complement, the top of reconciliation, that it is a perpetual reconciliation! So that, even if some of God’s ways may perhaps be towards you as if you were an enemy, and if God may so appear to you sometimes, yet peace is yours. God intends no hurt at all. Howsoever He may look sometimes as an enemy, yet at that time He means you not the least hurt. All the afflictions that befall you do not come from God as from an enemy, though perhaps, through your weaknesses, you may

think so; for though God is reconciled to you in so gracious a way, yet, if He corrects you, you are apt to look on Him as an enemy. No, it is your mistake. God's reconciliation is a thorough reconciliation, and will coexist with all the corrections He uses toward you.

7. Yes, this reconciliation will continue constant, notwithstanding all those sins of yours which indeed, of their own nature, make breaches between God and man. Take heed of abusing such a doctrine as this. Your sins cannot overcome God's goodness. Oh, let God's goodness overcome your wickedness! For this is certain: when the Lord was first reconciled to you, He knew there would be many failings and fallings out, as it were, yet He was resolved to be reconciled, and that that reconciliation should continue notwithstanding all those failings. And, though your sins may change some administrations of God toward you so that He may severely correct you, yet they shall not take away this reconciliation; the Lord will continue as your friend still. But if indeed you are reconciled, God will put this into your heart so that, when there is any failing in you, you will never be at quiet until you come to renew your peace again. You may lose the *sense* of your peace, but you shall never lose your peace indeed. And though we cannot speak such a truth as this is without fear and trembling (because it may cost the hardening of many a soul), yet so willing is God that His people shall be comforted that He will have this doctrine of reconciliation published, though it costs the damnation of many sinners.

8. The accusations of the devil against you shall never provoke God, so as to turn Him into your enemy again. There may be peace made between friend and friend, but there may be some whisperers, some talebearers and strife-makers who, by a spirit

of jealousy, may do an abundance of mischief by their suggestions. But this cannot be between God and us. It is true, the devil would continually make strife between God and your soul, and continually goes before God to accuse the soul; and therefore he is called the accuser of the brethren. But the peace that is made between God and a soul through His Son is so firm, and the friendship is so stable, that the Lord shuts His ears against all the accusations that can be made against His friends.

One friend cannot endure to hear ill of another. It is a sign that friendship begins to grow cold when people are willing to hear of any evil against their friend. The Lord will not listen to the least accusation that is made by Satan against His friend. He will not so much as be willing to hear of anything spoken against His people, such a perfect, thorough, and firm peace is there between the soul and God.

CHAPTER FIVE

Twelve Blessed Consequences of Our Reconciliation

But now what I especially intended was to show you some consequences of this peace. I want to show you the excellency of the reconciliation, and will give you the consequences very briefly.

CONSEQUENCE 1. From hence follows peace with all the creatures in the world, whereas before not only was God an enemy, but all creatures were your enemies. The good creatures, the ill creatures, your companions whom you thought to be your friends, the heavens, the earth, the beasts in the field, and the stones in your house were all your enemies. There was not the least creature in the world but was one of the host of God ready to avenge the quarrel of God on you.

You are afraid of soldiers. Why have you not all this while been afraid of the host of the Almighty God? God has soldiers enough, even in your own house, which He can raise up against you. He can raise the very dog that is in your family to tear out your throat if He once gives him the commission; for there is an enmity between every creature and a sinful soul, and it must be

so. If there is an enmity against the general, the commander-in-chief of the army, there must be the like enmity against the soldiers. You who are a sinful soul walk up and down in the midst of God's host that is ready every moment to destroy you, and that stands waiting for a commission from God, the Lord of Hosts, to avenge His quarrel on you.

But now, once you are reconciled to God, all this host, all the whole creation is reconciled to you. All the good creatures, the angels, are now for your good, whereas before they stood ready waiting for a commission from God to strike you to the heart. For the angels wait for God to give them a command to execute upon those who offend Him, and they are gone presently to put the same in execution; and so it is with every other creature. But now that you are reconciled, these angels have become ministering spirits to you. It is a great matter to have the angels reconciled. By your being at peace with God, they come to be reconciled also to you, and, instead of being your enemies, they are as so many fair chariots to guard you from whatsoever may hurt you.

The same I may say of all evil creatures too: they are all so far reconciled to you that they shall do you no hurt or prejudice.

CONSEQUENCE 2. A second fruit that follows is peace of conscience. Before your conscience terrified you, struck fear and dread in your heart, continually accused you before God, and was as God's officer to fill your soul with poisoned arrows, and to rend and tear you. But now, you being at peace with God, your conscience is at peace too. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Then follow those most sweet and comfortable effects which we are afterwards to treat. But this is the fruit of reconciliation: peace

of conscience, which is worth ten thousand worlds. For one to have his conscience his enemy, to have his conscience continually to terrify him, is greater judgment than to have all the wild beasts in the world come and tear and rend his flesh.

CONSEQUENCE 3. There is in the soul a peace in all other faculties. For example, before the work of reconciliation between God and man is done, the Scripture says, there is no peace to the wicked in regard to the tumultuous working of the many lusts that are in their hearts, the one continually fighting against the other. The conscience tells one thing and the will of a man who opposes conscience tells another. And the affections are all in a tumult one against another—one lust opposes another, fighting against another. There is disorder and confusion and tumult in the heart of a wicked man: he goes against the light and the light goes against him, and there is nothing but warring and combustion in his heart. “Your lusts (said the apostle) war one against another within you” (James 4:1), and you may easily find it to be so if you observe yourselves that when your lusts are up they breed such a woeful disturbance in your heart that you are like the sea that casts up nothing but mire and dirt.

Take a wicked man who has but some darting in of any light, telling him what the mind of God is, and his heart fights against this light and the light fights against his heart. There is nothing but woeful disturbances in his soul, and he is never at peace, no, not even when he seems to be most serene and quiet. But when we come to be at peace with God, a blessed calm comes into the spirit of man. The conscience, the will, and the affections are brought to a sweet and comely order, and things are in great measure more quiet than ever they were.

CONSEQUENCE 4. The fourth fruit is joy in the Holy Ghost. When God is at peace with a soul, the Holy Spirit comes and

sheds abroad the love of God. It is true, sometimes we are not sensible of this joy, but once we come to know that we are reconciled to God, then we come to feel the joy of the Holy Spirit shed abroad in our hearts. This you have in Romans 5:1, 3: "Having peace with God, we rejoice in tribulation." And more especially in Romans 14:17: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Joy in the Holy Spirit follows our peace or our reconciliation with God.

CONSEQUENCE 5. Another fruit is that the soul comes to have free access to God's presence with boldness. Indeed, when I look on God as an enemy to me, and on myself as an enemy to God, how can I come into God's presence with boldness? But, being reconciled, I come to have access to God. Adam could not stand in God's presence once he had broken his peace with God, but, our peace being made through Jesus Christ, we may come into the presence of God, comfortably look upon His face, and see no hatred, no avenging wrath in it.

CONSEQUENCE 6. Hence there may be a sweet and blessed trade between heaven and earth, between God and the reconciled soul. In countries that are at war one with another, there cannot be any traffic or trading between them. But once there comes to be a league and peace made between the one and the other, then trade is open. So it is between God and the soul. And, the truth is, there is no free trade made between heaven and us until peace is made. We cannot trade with heaven and fetch commodities from there. We may speak to heaven, and cry and say our prayers, but to fetch from there the rich commodities that are in that country, this we cannot do until there is a peace concluded. Indeed, a gracious heart that is reconciled to God never sends up a prayer to God but as a rich man

who sends a ship to the Indies. No, it is far more and better, for you may lose your ship, and your adventure that you send may miscarry. But when a gracious soul trades with God, and sends his ship of prayer to heaven, he never fails of having sweet and rich return.

CONSEQUENCE 7. We come to enjoy all the good we have in this world as through a new right. It is settled upon us, and comes to us on a new account through a new right, and so it is far more comfortable than before. Before we had forfeited all that we had because we had taken up arms against God. And, you know, once there is a taking up of arms, that very act occasions presently a forfeiting of an estate. So we, having taken up arms against the God of heaven, have forfeited all our comforts and enjoyments, and we have cause to wonder that God does not send some arrest on our estates and seize upon all that we have. But now, peace being made between God and us, all is restored again. So those who are reconciled to God may enjoy comfort in what they possess. They may look on their houses, on their trade, on their meat, and on their drink as all fruits of their peace with God.

CONSEQUENCE 8. Hence follows likewise the protection of God over us, and over all we have, so that we may enjoy all securely. I do not deny that God may send the adversary, and He may take away our goods when He sees it may make for our good. But certainly we are under God's protection, and there shall not one hair fall from our heads without leave and commission from God. The enemy cannot take away one hair, or one farthing token, without commission from God, under whose protection we are. You shall not lose so much as one farthing but such as, if you knew all things, you would be willing to lose.

You will say, "Would anyone be willing to be plundered?"

Truly, if you knew that there was the work of God's wisdom in it for you, and how it accomplished His end and worked His glory, if you loved God, you would willingly give up yourselves and your estates to Him and say, "It is better for me to give up all that I have when it may be for the glory of God—though I cannot tell the particular way, yet I know God will have His glory by it—than it is for me still to retain the possession."

Therefore the saints of God have nothing taken away from them but what is by warrant from God, who is our friend and remains our friend. We do not understand the vastness of God's love if we think that God's love cannot stand with such a work as taking away some of our estate. God's love is so vast that it can stand with a *thousand* such things. All these troubles and afflictions, falling into the infinite sea of God's love, make no alteration.

CONSEQUENCE 9. Upon this reconciliation with God, you and God come to have common friends and common enemies. Does God come into a league with you, and are you reconciled to God? Henceforward God says, "All your enemies shall be My enemies, and all your friends shall be My friends, and so it shall be with you; you shall look upon all My enemies as your enemies, and upon all My friends, as your friends."

CONSEQUENCE 10. Now you come to be in as good a condition as ever you were before there was any sin committed in the world. We were at peace with God in Adam, but it is broken. I do not say this which we have now is peace so properly as it is reconciliation; it is a recovering of peace, and you, being received into this peace, are in as good a condition, in as happy an estate, as Adam was in innocence, yes, and happier too. For though there was a peace between God and him then, yet there was a possibility for Adam to turn into an enemy to God. But it

is not so with you; now you are therefore safer. God's heart is as much towards you as ever it was towards Adam, yes, more, for you are in a better covenant now, namely a covenant of grace, though no thanks to sin. But God has so ordered it and turned it that (as they say of a bone that is broken, if it is well set) it is stronger than it was before.

So when the heart is true and well set in this reconciliation with God, it is more firm with God. It is in a better condition than it was before the breach was made. This is that which may be an abundance of joy to the heart of a man. When one has been in a dispute with a great man, at whose disposal lies his life and all that he has, what a joyful thing is it to that man when there comes in one to reconcile them both, and so to reconcile them that he shall be in a better condition than ever he was, that he shall have the great man to be a surer friend to him than ever he was. Well, Christians, go together and rejoice in this blessed goodness of God, in this happy reconciliation which Christ is come to make between God and man.

CONSEQUENCE 11. By our peace, and with our peace, whatsoever wrath of God, whatsoever judgments of God come abroad or are executed in the world, we come to be freed from the evil of them, so that none of that wrath shall befall us, not in any avenging way, as it befalls wicked and ungodly men; but we shall certainly be delivered from all the evil of it. When judgments are sent from heaven abroad into the world, there is a protection for all those who are reconciled to God. Though there is darkness everywhere else, yet there is a light in their hearts. They are always in Goshen. Though God is never so terrible in His judgments to others, yet this terror of God is taken from them.

If you should hear the noise of trumpets and drums, the neighing of horses, the roaring of cannons and shooting of muskets, and all the dreadful sound of warlike instruments,

peradventure, at first, it may strike some fear and terror into you; but when you come to hear that all comes from your friend, it takes away the terror of these things. If a man comes to a house where there is a company of fierce mastiff dogs that are barking as if they would come presently and tear out his throat, he may be in some fear; but if the master of the house is his friend, and if he stands by, he need not then fear that any hurt shall come to him by them. It is true indeed, if he is an enemy or a thief who comes to steal and destroy, he may fear these mastiffs. So the troubles of the world may come with open mouth as if they would devour us, but if we are God's friends, if He stands by, we need not fear what they can do to us, for we have a protection from God from all the evils that are in the world. Though the devouring angel shall come to destroy, yet (if the blood of Christ who is our peace be sprinkled on the posts of the doors of our hearts) this angel shall pass away from us. This is another fruit of our peace with God, namely, protection from the wrath of God when it spreads abroad as lightning in the world.

CONSEQUENCE 12. Hence all that is in God's Word speaks peace to us, both the law and the gospel. The very law itself comes to speak peace to us because it is now fully satisfied. There is nothing in the Word of God but is at peace with those who are at peace with Him. The threats that are in the Word of God bring no evil at all to him who is reconciled to God. Every part of God's Word does good to them who walk uprightly, according to Micah 2:7: "Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" When you read any part of the Word of God, though never so terrible, if you are reconciled to God you may read it with comfort. Many people dare not read something of God's Word; they scarcely dare come to hear something of God's Word. But if you are at peace with God, you need not fear the reading or the hearing of any part of God's Word.

What is the reason why many people, when there is an argument preached that has any terror in it, will come no more to hear it? It is, whatever their pretenses are, a sign that there is some guilt in their hearts. They look on the Word of God as if it were their enemy. And it is a sad thing for a man to look on any part of God's Word as his enemy. Certainly if any part of God's Word is your enemy, God is your enemy; for there is no part of the Word of God but there is God's mind and God's heart in it. And therefore, if you are at peace with God, there is nothing in that Word of God which is your enemy.

Take a man who is on the sea. If storms and tempests arise, he may perhaps be afraid to look out. He may not dare to stir out of his cabin. But if he is on the shore, he can stand and look on all the waves on the sea, and on all the boisterousness of it, without any trouble to him. So, when men are in their natural condition, when they are not converted to God, then when they come to hear of the terrors of the law, alas, they cannot enter into consideration of that wrath of God which the law threatens, and which they apprehend is due to them because of sin! But their very heart shakes, and they even shut their eyes against those truths. But when they get to the shore, when there is a peace made between God and them, then they may look upon all the terrors of the law, and upon all that wrath that is threatened, with joy and comfort, and bless the name of God forever that they are freed and delivered from them.

These are the blessed and happy fruits of our peace and reconciliation with God. And now, before we go any further, we must abide awhile in the application of what has been opened to you so far concerning the excellencies, the glorious fruits of this peace and reconciliation.

CHAPTER SIX

Use 1: Peaceableness

*F*rom hence it must follow that if there is such a blessed peace between God and a true Christian as has been opened, then he must be very peaceable in the world. He must be of a very peaceable disposition before men.

You will say, “How does this follow?”

There is so much sweetness in this peace with God that it must so quiet the spirit of that man in whom it is that whatsoever is without shall never be able to make any great disturbance in his spirit, so great and so excellent is the sweetness of this peace. A merchant who has all his estate in one ship’s bottom is, upon every stirring of the winds or on the hearing of any storm, afraid that all is cast away. But if he hears news that the ship is safe and that all has come securely into the haven, his spirit that was afraid before will be now so quieted and satisfied with this news that it will not be a very easy matter at such a time to anger such a man.

There is nothing more able to keep the heart of a man from passion, frowardness, and disturbance than a full satisfaction within his own spirit. Now, if there is anything in the world that is able to satisfy the spirit of a man, surely it is peace with God; it is that reconciliation which is made between a man and God. The

Scripture says that “a good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Proverbs 14:14). Although he meets with those without who are troublesome and will not satisfy him, he has so much within that he satisfies and quiets his own spirit. Therefore a Christian need not be beholden to the world for peace, for he has peace enough within his own bosom. That which is the greatest jewel in the world, a Christian has the full possession of within his own heart. All the storms and tempests that are abroad in the world can never make an earthquake if there are not some vapors within to do it. Similarly, that which shakes the hearts of men, and makes a combustion in their spirits, is more the inward disturbances that are within than anything from without. We may complain of outward things and the like, but, the truth is, if all is examined, and the true ground of our disquietness searched into, we shall find that the cause of all our disturbance is rather from within than from without; and if all were well within, we would never be troubled with anything which befalls us from without.

Now, then, if anything in the world will make all quiet within, if anything in the world will beget a serenity and calmness in the spirits of men, it is this reconciliation with God. It is no marvel then that the gospel speaks so much of the peaceable disposition of those who entertain it; that it tells us of the wolves dwelling with the lamb, of the lions eating straw with the ox; that is, though men were formerly of such wolfish and lion-like natures, yet, having received the gospel and accepted the terms of reconciliation with God, they shall be as lambs: they shall agree with one another. And the reason is because there is so much in the peace of the gospel as will quiet the heart so that a man may wonder, when he considers the excellency of the peace between God and man, how it is possible for a Christian to be put into a passion. You complain of the troubles you meet with in your world, that your husband is froward,

or that your wife is froward, that you have perverse neighbors, but is God at peace with you? Is He froward towards you? And shall your spirits be disturbed with those things when you are at peace with God? Is there not enough in this peace to swallow up all those disturbances?

I have observed that it is a frequent complaint of those who are taken to be godly men that others will say, "Such a one is a very good man, but he is very passionate and froward." Truly it is an extreme blot to professors. And the truth is, if we duly consider all things, a man would think there should be nothing more opposite to the spirit of a Christian than frowardness and passion, nothing more opposite to true grace. For when grace comes, when faith in Christ comes, it breeds such an abundance of peace in our hearts that one would think that frowardness and passion with anything in the world would be inconsistent with the reconciliation here spoken of, with true grace and faith in Christ. When men are of such spirits that they are soon put into a passion and, being in a passion, cannot be reconciled, it is a dangerous sign that there is not that peace made between God and your souls that we speak of. And certainly this is the reason why many Christians are as passionate as they are: because they do not maintain their peace with God. There is usually some breach in their peace with God which makes them so froward and passionate as they are with men.

And to show that the more our peace with God is broken, the more froward will our spirits be, you have a notable example in Saul. When Saul first came to the crown, he seemed to be of a very low and meek spirit. He accounted his family as the least of the tribes, and himself to be the least of that family. And when there were some children of Belial who spoke against him and said, "Shall this man be king over us?" the Scripture tells us that he held his peace. And when some would have had

those who spoke against him to be put to death, Saul said, "No, there shall not any man be put to death this day." At first, you see, Saul was a quiet spirit and of a very meek disposition, but after Saul had departed from God, and God had departed from him, he was then of a very froward, surly, rugged, and harsh disposition. Before he was of a peaceable and quiet disposition to his enemies, yet afterwards he was of a froward and cross disposition even to his own son, Jonathan, who was a good son, a gracious and godly son, a son of a sweet nature. Yet even to him how harsh was he! "O thou child of a perverse woman," said he, and would have slain him in that passion if the people had not prevented him. And how froward was he likewise when he was but crossed of his will, when he heard that the priests had let David pass away with some final supplies. They must all be put to death: man, woman, child, and fourscore and five of the priests of the Lord who wore a linen ephod must all be presently murdered, such a froward, cross, rugged, and harsh nature Saul had. And what was the reason for this? Because he had departed from God and God was departed from him.

You, therefore, who are of froward and passionate spirits have cause to look into your own hearts and examine yourselves whether this is not the ground of it: that you have broken your peace with God. Now you are not at peace with anyone, not with husband, not with wife, and not with neighbors, whereas if you kept close with God, and maintained the sweetness of your hearts in the enjoyment of peace with Him, it would not be easy for you to be disturbed with anything that befalls you from without.

This is the first thing that follows from the sweetness of our reconciliation with God. A gracious heart who knows what that means must be of a sweet, lovely, and meek disposition towards others.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Use 2: The Blessed State of a Believer

*S*econd, oh, the blessed state of a believer, of one who has embraced the gospel: he is reconciled to God; he is at peace with God, and that has a great deal in it as you have heard. The Jews were wont to express all kind of prosperity and happiness by this word “peace”: “Peace be to you”; and in saying so, they included all manner of good. For indeed the word is a comprehensive word; and therefore God accounts it His glory to be called the God of peace. It is the glory of the Son of God to be the Prince of Peace. It is the glory of the Spirit of God to have the fruits of the Spirit to be joy and peace. It is the honor of the gospel to be the gospel of peace. It is the glory of the kingdom of God to consist in righteousness and peace. It is the evangelical benediction: grace and peace. It is the glory of the covenant of life to be a covenant of peace.

Peace is a most amiable thing, but how lovely, amiable, and glorious is peace with God! Ask a wounded conscience that apprehends, and is sensible of the enmity that sin has put between God and it, what it would give for peace with God. Ask a dying man who apprehends what God is, one who has no peace with God, what he would give for peace with God! If you could possibly

ask those damned spirits that are now in hell what they think of peace with God, oh, what a commendation would they set on this peace! Well may we be willing to endure some trouble in seeking after this peace with God. Well may we be contented to lie under the stroke of the law as long as God pleases, for this peace will at last make up all. Those who have endured the greatest terrors of the law, when the Lord has come in with manifestations of this peace and reconciliation to them in Jesus Christ, have thought all well recompensed; and if it had been necessary to endure a thousand times more than they have done, they would have thought all to have been made up in this blessed peace. This is a blessing indeed in these troublesome times wherein we hear of nothing but wars and rumors of wars, and, when we are taught, by what we now hear and feel and know to prize outward peace. But if we think outward peace is so great a mercy, what is this reconciliation and peace with God, the soul's blessings?

“Yes,” you will say, “there is a great deal of blessing indeed in this reconciliation with God which we have read of, and happy is the soul that is at peace with Him. But how shall we know that we are those who are reconciled to God so that we may enjoy those blessed fruits of reconciliation that are here treated of?”

I confess this is worth knowing and searching after, and it is a good sign if your hearts are seriously inquisitive to know how terms stand between God and your souls. This is a thing that does not usually take up the thoughts of men, and perhaps there are many who scarcely, in all the days of their lives, had their thoughts seriously consider how the terms stand between God and their soul: “I go up and down here in the world, and busy myself about this and the other thing, but oh, my soul, how do things stand between God and you? Are all things well there? Are all things quiet there? Has not God something against you? Has not God dreadful things to charge upon you?”

“Yes,” you will say, “God has enough to charge upon us all.”

No, but if you are at peace with God in Christ, God has nothing to charge you with. And it is possible for one to be in such a condition as to know that God has nothing to charge him with, and so he may be able to stand before the Lord as freed from anything that God has to lay to his charge. This might be manifested further as the excellency of our peace with God. It is true, none can be in such a condition but that they have sin enough in themselves to be charged upon them, if God should look upon them in themselves; and those souls that charge themselves most, those usually God has least to charge upon. In themselves, I affirm, God has enough against them; but God, looking upon them in Jesus Christ, has nothing to charge them with so that they should stand guilty in His presence or be answerable to His law which they have broken.

You will say, “How then can God afflict for sin?”

It does not follow that, because men have nothing to answer to the law, therefore they are not to be afflicted; for afflictions to those who are reconciled to God are not fruits of the law, but they are dispensations of God in His ways of wisdom to His people, because He thinks that afflictions are a fit way to manifest to themselves, and to the world, that He is a holy God, and that He is displeased with sin. And God works on them in such a way, but not for the purpose of giving satisfaction to divine justice; that is not God’s end in afflicting them. There is a great deal of difference between a fatherly displeasure and an avenging displeasure. God has swallowed up in this reconciliation all the displeasure of a judge, all His avenging displeasure; and He has everlastingly swallowed it up. Yet there may remain the other. He has not swallowed up His fatherly displeasure, but retains it, and that without any derogation to Himself, all tending to the good of those against whom the Lord manifests such displeasure.

CHAPTER EIGHT

How to Know Whether a Man's Peace Is Made with God

1. Every weapon of war against God is laid down
2. There have been treaties of peace between God and that soul
3. Peace with God will make you abhor yourself for your former cursed ways.
4. It will make you on God's side.
5. It will preserve from evil.
6. It will enable you to suffer much.
7. It will make you highly prize it.

But I say, the soul should be often inquiring how things stand between God and itself: "Are the terms right between God and my soul? Am I at peace with Him or not? If not, how can I sleep? How can I go about my business and God be an enemy to me? And if I do go about my business, it is a sign of a bold and presumptuous heart to go up and down merrily and quietly."

And yet this great question of how terms are between God

and the soul comes not to be determined. Would you then know whether indeed the terms are good, right, and peaceable between God and you?

1. Certainly, unless you have laid down all your weapons of war and enmity against God, you are not yet at peace with Him. Can you in the uprightness of your heart appeal to God thus: "Lord, you know there is no weapon of enmity against You in my heart that ever I have taken notice of, but I have been willing, and shall be willing, to lay it down. And God forbid that ever there should be the least weapon of war found in my heart against God"?

Every known sin in you is a weapon of warfare against God, and, though you should lay down many, yet if that is not laid down, if you keep any one known sin within you, certainly that one sin is enough to make an eternal breach and enmity between God and your soul. Now, be not at quiet; be not at rest in your own spirit; do not sleep quietly this night unless you can bring your heart to the place where you can go in secret between God and yourself and say: "O Lord, Thou knowest I have renounced all the ways of sin that ever Thou hast revealed to me. Though my sins cleave to me as close as my skin to my flesh, yet as soon as I take notice of them, as soon as Thou makest them known to me, I cry out and complain against them."

Suppose that in time of war some men come into your houses, and you know not, at their first coming, who they are. But afterward, by their carriage, behavior, and speech you take notice that they are your enemies. Now if after taking notice of them you shall make much of them, cherish them, entertain them, and supply their wants, giving them money, or food, or whatever else you have, you will be found to be an enemy to the state. But if, as soon as you take notice of them, you desire them

to be gone, and you do what you can to thrust them out of your doors, and if they be too strong for you, you go and complain to your neighbor, or to the officers who are about you, and you desire them to afford you some strength to apprehend them, it cannot be charged that you are an enemy to the state. Why not? Because though they are in your house, yet it is sorely against your will.

And so many men, though they entertain their corruptions, and cherish them and fulfill the lusts of them, think to put it off with this: "What will you have me to do? I cannot help it."

But do you complain of it? Do you cry out to God and say, "Lord, here is an enemy, an enemy to Thee as well as to myself, an enemy to Thy glory as well as to my own soul. Oh, that Thou wouldest come in and cast this enemy of mine and Thine out of my heart. I cannot sleep quietly. I cannot rest and be at peace so long as this enemy is within me, until Thou come and cast it out"?

It is a sign that you are at peace with God if you have laid down your weapons of warfare against God and are at enmity with every sin, if you entertain in your bosom no known sin, though never so secret. And this is the most eminent sign that can be, so that the weakest Christian may be able to apply it to himself and come to know somewhat about this peace with God.

2. If you would know whether God and you are reconciled, then let me put this to you: what treaties have there been made between God and your soul? For this you must know, that though there may be a peace indeed made between God and you, in some form even from eternity (as I shall afterwards show you), yet before it comes into your heart, before you can come to know it, there must be a treaty between God and you. Reconciliation that is from eternity comes from treaties between God the Father and God the Son, and that

reconciliation that in time comes into the conscience is a fruit of some treaty that has taken place between God, and yourself. For example, when God would be at peace with a soul, He summons that soul to come in. He tells it that it is an enemy to Him, and that it is going in contrary ways to Him. When enemies come to a town, they will first summon the town before they storm it. So the Lord summons you to come in. When did God ever summon your heart? Have you felt the power of God's summons in your soul? Then, again, have you felt much intercourse between God and your soul? Has God been speaking to your heart, and your heart speaking to God? Has God been working towards you, and has your heart been working towards God? Has the Lord sent to you by His Word, and have you sent up to Him by prayer? As the Lord waits on you to know what your answer is when He speaks to you, do you wait on Him to know His answer when you pray? What have been the treaties that have passed secretly in your closet between God and your soul?

You do not go on in a dull way and come and hear the Word of God, but never hearing the voice of God; but when you come to hear God's Word, you hear God's voice. You hear Him speak to you, treating with you about matters of peace, and you feel God's Spirit drawing your heart, and telling something of God's mind to you. Perhaps at this time, and for the present while you are hearing, you tell God secretly by ejaculations: "Lord, I am willing to accept those terms of peace and reconciliation. I am willing to accept the conditions of the covenant." Or perhaps, when you do not add this when you are hearing, yet when you are alone, then you open yourself more to God and send a full answer to God. This is the way of treating, that when you come to hear God's Word offering terms of peace, and requiring such and such terms, you, at the very hearing, send up by ejaculations

secretly in answer to God: "Lord, I accept the terms." And when you are gone, you send up a full answer; and then how do you bless His name that ever He was pleased to offer such terms to you, though they were a thousand times harder.

Have there ever been any such doings in your heart? Has it been one of the greatest works that ever your heart has been set upon? Has your heart been set more upon this work of the treaty with God about peace than anything that ever concerned you in all your life? Then it is good evidence to you that you are in a way of peace, and if your conscience speaks peace to you from this it will be comfortable evidence indeed. But, the truth is, I cannot give you the full and thorough evidence so as fully to satisfy your heart until I come to the next point, which is to show you how the heart is brought to Christ and reconciled to God in Him. But something may be done to help the soul along that way.

3. If you are at peace with God, then upon God's being pacified towards you, your apprehension of it will make you look back to your former wretched dealings with God and be confounded in your own thoughts. It will cause you to abhor yourself for that cursed carriage of your heart towards Him, and your dealings with Him when you were in a way of opposition and when you were walking contrary to Him.

I will give you a most excellent Scripture for that. Ezekiel 16:63: "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more." Why? "Because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done." That is the time, you see, when the soul comes to be ashamed of its wretched dealings with God, and to be confounded in the thought, when the Lord is pacified towards it for all the evil that it has done towards Him. Lay this, therefore, when you lay aside this book and are alone, warmly to your hearts. A

man might think that this promise would rather be answered when God comes and reveals the fruits of this wrath towards a soul. "No, but when I am pacified (says God) towards you, then you shall be confounded and never open your mouth any more."

So if you have any evidence, any sound evidence, to your soul that the Lord is pacified towards you for all the evil that you have done against Him, it will make you look back to your former actions. And when you remember them you will be confounded in your own thoughts, and whatever God does with you, you will never open your mouth any more, but will be ashamed of yourself for all your wicked dealings towards God. Many of your consciences may tell you that you have been divers horrible things against the Lord. What sins have many of you not lived in? Do you hope that God is reconciled to you, and pacified towards you for all those horrible things that you have done? If He is, you will, upon this grace of God towards you, look back upon what you have done formerly, and be confounded in your own souls. And the more you apprehend your peace to be made with God, the more will you be ashamed, and the more will you be troubled for what you have done.

Many a wretched sinner who has lived in the ways of sin, when the fear of death comes upon him, will be confounded and ashamed of what he has done. And then he will complain and cry out to others, desiring them to pray for him. But that is not the thing that God here speaks of, for let God but set such a one on his feet again, and free him from his sickness and fears, and he is no longer confounded and ashamed, but will be as jolly and as merry as before. But if God indeed is pacified towards your soul, you will then be confounded and ashamed for all the evils that you have done against Him. This

is as comfortable an argument that peace is made between God and us, and that He is reconciled towards us, as any I know: when upon the apprehension of that peace and reconciliation we come to be confounded in our souls.

4. One who is at peace with God will evermore be on God's side. He will go whichever way the cause of God goes, and he will be content, though it is never so dangerous to venture himself on God's side. Such a one, by a secret instinct from God Himself, is able to know and distinguish which is God's side, and he is not so full of questions as others are. So, being once reconciled to God and at friendship with Him, he will always be on that side.

Many will say, "Indeed, if we knew which was God's side, we would be on it."

Friends, the reason why you find it so hard to find and discern the side of God and know it is because you are not friends to God. If God were your friend, His secrets would be made known to you. Try now whether it is so with you or not. Wherever you are, if there is a siding against God, though there are but few who stand up for Him and His cause, you will be sure to join with them who stand for God, though they are the fewest, and though they are lowest in the town where you live. This is a true argument that you are one who is at peace with God.

5. If you are at peace with God, this peace has a great deal of power to preserve you from evil. The peace of God shall keep your hearts and shall guard your hearts (Philippians 4:7). The verb used signifies "to keep as with a guard." It will guard as a house is guarded by a troop of horses or band of soldiers. If temptations come, the peace of God will guard your hearts and keep you in a gracious frame; it will be of a mighty power to keep the soul from evil. I do not know a stronger guard in the

world to keep a man from the evil of sin than the peace of God made known to the soul.

6. If you are at peace with God, this peace will enable you to suffer much in God's cause. "Being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15); that is, the peace that the gospel brings will enable you to tread on sharp stones—for from thence the phrase is taken and signifies as much. In those places they used to go with sandals under their feet, it being grievous and hurtful to them to go barefoot on sharp stones. One who is well-booted or buckskinned can walk unhurt in briars and brambles, and so may he walk amidst Satan's snares who is fortified with gospel comforts, whereby God creates peace. The apostle is saying, "You may meet with rough and sharp ways in your Christian course, but the peace which the gospel brings will be as shoes to enable you to go upon those sharp stones." Does the peace of God enable you to suffer much for God? It is a sign then that you are at peace with Him.

7. Last, he who is at peace with God sets a mighty high esteem on that peace. He will not easily part with it. He will not easily lose it. It is the bird in the bosom that he desires to keep singing. Whatever becomes of him, as long as he can keep that bird singing in his breast, he thinks himself well enough, though he should meet with never so many difficulties and hardships in the ways of God. One who has this peace with God knows how to prize it, for the truth is, ordinarily, it is gotten with a great deal of difficulty. It cost them something, and it cost Jesus Christ something before they could get it.

Do you have peace with God? If it is of the right stamp, know it cost you dearly; and it cost Jesus Christ dearly, and surely, now that you have it, it will be dear likewise to your soul. So if sin should present itself to you, and go about to withdraw

your heart from God to that which is evil, this will be the very thought of your heart (though, perhaps, there may be pleasure and profit in the way which sin presents to you), this will be the very thought of your heart: "Will it not hinder my peace with God?" If there is the least suspicion of that, "Away with it," says the soul. "I will not buy the pleasure or the profit of sin at so dear a rate."

The soul says to sin as the fig tree and olive tree said to the other trees when they would come and persuade them to rule over them (Judges 9:8–11). "Shall I lose my sweetness?" said the fig tree. "Shall I lose my fatness," said the olive tree, "to come and be king over you?" So says the heart that is reconciled to God when sin and the world present themselves to it: "Shall I lose my sweetness and my fatness? Shall I lose that blessed quietude that is between God and me, to come and close with you? Oh, God forbid. Surely, I will never buy the sweetness of sin at such a dear rate."

It is true indeed that the men of the world who have a false peace will venture that peace on any light occasion. If a man has a jewel that is false, such a thing as a bristol stone that is not worth two pence, he will not be very careful of it. But if he has a jewel that is a true diamond, or that is a right pearl, he will not venture that upon a little matter. The peace that most men have is a counterfeit, false peace, and they will soon venture it on any terms. When men can so readily yield to the temptations of sin, it is an evident argument that the peace they have is but a false peace, and that is the reason why they can part with it on such easy conditions. But the soul that has true peace with God looks on it as a jewel of an inestimable value, as a precious pearl. "Here is my happiness," says he; "you shall not take this away from me with a whistle, with a light matter. I will not part with this which cost me so dearly,

and which cost Jesus Christ Himself so dearly, no less than His own blood.”

Most people in the world think they have peace with God, but, let me ask, what did your peace cost you? It cost little, and so “easy come, easy go.” That is the reason why all your loose professors walk so carelessly in their ways: the peace they have had comes lightly to them, and so goes lightly away from them. They have patched for themselves a peace, but they have not the right understanding of the mystery of the soul’s reconciliation to God. And that is the very ground of the looseness of their conversations.

I have endeavored to help you examine whether your peace is true or not. If you can, on these signs or notes, conclude your peace to be right, blessed are you; go your way rejoicing, and join with the angels in their song: “Glory to God in heaven, and peace on earth. Glory be to the great God who is on high, who has not only made peace on earth, but made peace in my bosom. And therefore, O my soul, return to your rest.”

Your soul may now even take its ease. You have a notable expression concerning this from Psalm 25:12–13, where, speaking of the happiness of the godly, David says, “What man is he that feareth the Lord? His soul shall dwell at ease.” Oh, it is a blessed thing to have a soul dwell at ease! You would fain have comfortable habitations for your bodies, where you may live at ease and not be disturbed or troubled, either with ill neighbors or with fear of enemies. Oh, but to have your souls dwell at ease, *that* is your happiness. And therefore, though in many places of the nation our brethren abroad can have no house where they may live at ease, but are always in great straits and dangers, yet by this peace with God, if it is made sure to you, though you may be in the middle of your enemies, your soul

may come to dwell at ease. Remember that passage therefore; it is a blessed and sweet promise, and you should make much of it in such troublesome times as these are, that he who fears the Lord, his soul shall dwell at ease.

CHAPTER NINE

Use 3: Five Helps to Making Our Peace with God

1. Keep from the outward acts of sin
2. Labor to set God continually before you
3. Resolve not to be at peace with yourselves until you are at peace with God
4. Seek peace with God on His own conditions
5. Prize peace with God now, as you will value it at the day of judgment

*T*hat we may conclude this particular of the excellency of our reconciliation with God, there is yet another use which we may make of it: if it is of such a great excellency to be at peace with God, oh, that you would all be in love with it, that you would all seek to make your peace with Him who is the great Reconciler.

You will say, “Can we make our peace with God?”

No, you cannot do it, but it is in a great part done to your hands if you have hearts to seek after it. It is true, there is another point (but that will fall in afterward) to show how it is done to the hand of some already. But for the present, you must know that you can have no evidence to your own conscience until you

seek after this peace. And the truth is, if we either knew the need of it or the excellency of the enjoyment of it, we would never be at rest in anything until we came to be assured that it is ours.

You will say, “What shall we do?”

I answer, though we know that it is the great work of Christ to make our peace with God, yet God requires this, and in requiring it (if you belong to Him) He will convey some secret influences of His grace to you to enable you to do it. He will give you a heart to labor for it, which indeed is one sign of our peace.

HELP 1. And therefore let me persuade you to do what you can. Do but keep (for the present) from the outward acts of sin, and do not willfully give way to the inward or outward acts of sin. Labor to get your hearts to the point where may you say, “The Lord knows I do not willfully yield to any known sin.” Convince your hearts, possess your hearts thoroughly that it is the great work that you have to do in the world, that this is that one thing that is necessary for your souls, and you shall find that even this will be a mighty thing to help you on.

HELP 2. Again, labor to set God continually before you—the greatness of God, the majesty of God, the power of God, and the goodness of God; labor to set these before you to draw your hearts to seek after making peace with God.

There is an excellent Scripture in Isaiah 27:5 that is somewhat difficult to understand, but it is very sweet if rightly understood: “Let him take hold of My strength that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me.”

It is a strange kind of phrase, and I find a great deal of difference among interpreters about this text. I find Calvin, who usually hits as right as most, interpreting it as an interrogation. And so he says you may read it like this: “Will he take hold of My

strength that he may make peace with Me?” It is as if he should have said, “What will he do? Will he stay so long until he comes to be made sensible of My power upon him, and of My strength to bring him down? And then it may be that he will make peace with Me.”

Many do this. They stay until God comes to make them sensible of His power and His strength, and then they will make their peace with God. I hardly think this to be the scope of the passage, but it is a very good meditation to set God before you in His power, His strength, and His glory, and to meditate with yourselves: “Oh, if the Lord should come now, and make me apprehensive and sensible of that power and strength of His, indeed this will stir up my heart to seek to make my peace with Him.” What is the reason that so many shrieks and cries come from souls when they are sensible of God’s power and strength? Oh, they well know what a mighty God they have to do with!

The truth is, the reason why men do not make it their work now to seek reconciliation and peace with God is because they are not apprehensive of the power, majesty, and glory that are in God—how God is above them, and can bring them under and make them vile and base when He pleases. Therefore it is a good interpretation to read the words, “Will he take hold, or apprehend My strength (so the word signifies) that he may make peace with Me?” But the meaning is rather this: “Will he make use of My goodness and My mercy, and so make peace with me?” For that is the strength that is here meant, and that I shall show you from the context.

Only first let me tell you that in Scripture “strength” is often used for God’s goodness and mercy—His power to do good as well as His power to inflict misery and judgment. I will give you but a Scripture or two for that. “And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou

hast spoken, saying, the Lord is of long suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (Numbers 14:17–18). And in verse 19: “Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Thy mercy.” When Moses was pleading with God for a pacification between Him and His people, he made use of God’s power: “O Lord, according to the greatness of Thy power (or, “according to the greatness of Thy strength,” for it is all one) do this.” So we read: “The Lord is the strength of my life” (Psalm 27:1), where God’s power and strength are terms used to set out the way of God towards David. And here the word signifies such a kind of strength as is to help something that is very weak. The vine, being very weak, if left to itself, falls down; and therefore you put props under your vines which have more strength in them than the vines have in themselves to keep them up. That is the very idea of the word in the original of Isaiah 27:5 which is translated “strength,” as if God had said, “Will he take hold of Me as of a prop?”

And that this is the meaning appears by the context of the words, for the prophet Isaiah was speaking of the goodness of God to His vineyard: “In that day sing you unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; least any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isaiah 27:2–3). What a sweet promise is this of God to His church! Are there a great many enemies abroad that are strong and powerful, and of swift feet, ready to shed blood? Mark, in one verse you shall read four “I’s”—I, I, I, I, says God: “I oppose myself to all the enemies of My church. I do keep it, I will water it every moment, I will keep it.”

But what shall become of it in the night?

“I will keep it,” says He, “night and day.” We have here a promise to help us to sleep quietly. He goes on in verse 4, “Fury

is not in Me.” It is as if He had said, “Though it is true that I may come against you in such ways that you may think I am provoked in an avenging way towards My people, ‘Who would set the briers and thorns against Me in battle?’ There are a company of wicked and ungodly men who may set themselves against Me like briers and thorns, but I will go through them if they come in My way, I will consume them, I will burn them together. But My people, they are My vineyard; I will deal gently with them; I will be a prop, and a support to them.”

And then He comes in with this: “Let them take hold of My strength that they may make peace with Me.” Again, it is as if He should say, “You are poor weak creatures; you are indeed My vineyard and My vine, but you are weak, and when a storm comes you are ready to bow down and lay flat on the ground. Yes, but,” says God, “though you think that My wrath is abroad in the world, yet My power and My wrath are against My enemies; and all My power and My strength are for you. It is no otherwise than as the setting of a prop under a vine in a time of tempest. When a storm would beat the vine to the ground, My power shall be set under to keep it up. Now you should take hold of My strength, as the vine clasps about the prop, and so make peace with Me.”

This is an excellent text to encourage you in these dangerous times, to be sure to make peace with God. You who are godly and have some hopes that God is at peace with you, it may be that you are troubled with fears of danger; know that God puts you under His power and His strength, and He would have you take hold of it. “Take hold of My strength,” says He, “even as the vine takes hold of the prop. And so, by renewing the act of faith upon My power and goodness, you shall renew your peace with Me so that, whatever fury is abroad to burn the briers and thorns, you shall have peace with Me, and that

power of mine that is put forth to destroy them shall be a prop to uphold you.” As this Scripture does much to expound what I said before, so it should put you on to a laboring and endeavoring to make your peace with God in troublesome times. Set, therefore, before your eyes the power and the greatness of God. That is one interpretation. Then set before your eyes the goodness and the mercy of God so that your hearts may come and twist themselves about this God as the vine does about the prop, or the hop about the pole.

HELP 3. In making your peace with God, observe this rule: resolve with your own hearts that you will never be at peace with yourselves until you are at peace with God, that you will never have any peace in your own hearts until you have true peace with God. I do not say that you should resolve never to have peace with others, but I say to resolve never to be at peace with yourselves. And it is a good controversy when men are at contentions with their evil hearts. Say to yourselves, “Shall I be at peace with this wretched heart that is an enemy to God? God forbid! This heart of mine shall be brought down and be at peace with God before ever I will be at peace with it.”

It is this which destroys many a soul, that they are so indulgent to their own hearts that they are loath to fall out with them. And the truth is, many keep on in ways of enmity against God because they are loath to fall out with their own hearts. We should be willing that our hearts should be troubled all our days so that the foundation of our peace and quiet might by this be laid and accomplished.

HELP 4. And then another way is this: come in before God, even with a rope about your neck and sackcloth on your loins. Cast yourself down before the Lord and beseech Him to write His own terms. Give up your heart to God as if it were a blank,

and pray the Lord to write His own conditions, only that God might be at peace with you. And if you do so indeed, then manifest the truth of it. If afterwards any temptation to any sin comes, or if you are cast on any duty and find your heart backward, make use then of the disposition of your heart. Think thus: "Was there not a time when I sought to make my peace with God? Was there not a time when I cast myself before the Lord, and then gave up myself as a blank to God, and entreated Him to write His own conditions? And now God requires this duty of me, and I am loath to come to it. Oh, I do not do now as I said I would do when I was seeking for peace. Here is such a temptation to sin. Oh, how opposite is this to that which I promised to God when I gave up my heart to Him."

My brethren, I put this to you: either you have come into God's presence and, as poor, humbled souls, have given up your hearts to God as blanks for Him to write His own terms on, or you have not. If you have not, then you are not at peace with God, and so you may go away assured that you have not done that great work which concerns you ten thousand times more than your breathing in the air.

But you will say, "I hope I have done this. I have been in my closet giving up my heart as a blank to God to write what conditions He pleases, and I have professed to yield to any terms."

Have you done so? Examine then the course of your lives, and see how answerable your actions are to such a thing.

You should do this at every fast, for every fast is either to make peace or renew your peace. Now this is one work of a day of atonement, to come in before the Lord and yield yourselves up to Him. And at the latter end of a day of fasting, enter into covenant with God to give up your hearts to God as a blank to write what He pleases. Either this must be done or else you take God's name in vain. Now if you do this, or have done this in

the uprightness of your hearts, then make use of this when any temptation comes, and say to yourselves, “Oh, this is suitable for one who has given up his heart to God!”

HELP 5. Oh, that we could now prize and make as a present before us what this peace will be to us at the day of judgment, when the glorious appearing of the great God shall be. Then you think it will be worth something; labor now to make it to your hearts of as much worth as it will be then. Endeavor to realize it now as it will be then. Certainly that is the reason why there are no more stirrings of the hearts of men after their making peace with God, because they do not apprehend really what that peace will be worth on another day. You have a precious Scripture: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing we look for such things, be diligent that you be found of Him in peace” (2 Peter 3:14). Do you not believe that there will be a manifestation of the glorious God one day in another manner than ever He was manifested here in the world? Do you not look for such things? If you do, certainly you will be glad to be at peace with God: “Seeing you look for such things (says the apostle), be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace.”

Let this take up your thoughts as the greatest business that your hearts can be set upon, that you may be found of Him in peace. Woe to you if you are then found to be enemies to God. What will become of you if you are not found of Him in peace? It would have been better for you that you had never been born.

But how can you be found of Him in peace? Mark what follows: “without spot and blameless.” This is the way to be at peace with God.

But you will say, “O Lord, if this is required as a way to be found of Him in peace, that we should be without spot and blameless, then we are undone, for who can be found of God without spot and blameless?”

Yet you see, this is the Word of God, and this is the truth of God, and truth must stand. It is a certain truth that whosoever shall be found of God in peace, when that glorious appearance of His shall take place must be without spot and blameless. If God finds any one spot on you, He will proceed against you as an enemy.

But you will say, "How is that?"

First, in Christ, there the soul stands before the Lord without spot, clear in the point of justification. And likewise, evangelically, it may be found so in God's esteem, for God calls the uprightness of man's heart perfection in other Scriptures: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), and "Let us perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). God looks so on it because God pardons all in Christ and accepts believers in Christ. And so they are presented before Him spotless and blameless, and He gives them a heart, too, to endeavor to wash away their spot and blame, and so to walk blameless before the Lord and before men.

This is the way of coming to make your peace with God. And oh, that reading this book might be a means that some soul might be reconciled to God who before was an enemy to Him! Oh, that this Scripture might be fulfilled in the bosoms of some souls! And thus, though but very briefly, I have passed over the opening of this point of reconciliation with the excellencies and blessed fruits of it.

CHAPTER TEN

God Begins the Work of Reconciliation with Man

*T*he thing I had hoped to finish in this chapter (but shall not until the following) is this: God goes first with His people in reconciling Himself. He begins the work. That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world. It is God who begins the work of reconciliation, and if God did not begin it, certainly we would never be reconciled to Him. It is God first who begins to have any thoughts about reconciliation, and if He had not have done it we would never have thought on it, but would have gone on being desperate enemies to Him all our lives.

Second, it is God who finds the way of reconciliation. We could never think of a way, or, if we did, we could never have found out a way.

Third, it is God who begins to offer terms of reconciliation. We would never go to God unless God came to us, such is the stoutness of our hearts.

Fourth, it is God who must not only come once, but again and again; after we have refused, God must begin again. Indeed, among men, when an inferior has offended one who is above him, he will say, "Let him come to me, if he will." God does not

stand on such terms. God does not say, "Let man come to Me first." No, God says, "I will go to him."

A man will say, "If he is the superior, I will never trouble my thoughts about it; it shall come from him first." But God does not say so. His thoughts have been toward us, and that from eternity. The Lord from eternity has had thoughts of peace towards us. He has found out ways for it, and He comes first to offer it.

But, says one who is offended by another, "I have been content to yield so far as to come to him and offer him peace; but I will never do it again. If ever there is any reconciliation between us, I promise you, he shall come to me the next time."

God does not say so to us. We would be undone if He should come once and offer peace to us, and on our refusal should stand on such terms as men do and say, "Well, I have offered peace once; but they shall begin next, or else there shall be no peace between us." No, God says, "Though I have offered it once, and it has been refused, I will offer it again."

Yea, further, God is willing to be first to yield to His poor creature. It may be that a man may be wrought so far as to say, "I will send to such a man the second time"; but when they are at parley and are together you shall see them (if one of them is superior to the other) tangle over who shall yield first, and it will be hard to bring the superior to yield. But God is not so. When we come to deal with God about our peace and reconciliation with Him, though our hearts stand against it, yet God yields first. And for that you have a notable text, "If when we were enemies we were reconciled unto God" (Romans 5:10), which phrase plainly notes that God is content to yield first on His part. This is the infinite grace and goodness towards man, thus to begin with man in the point of reconciliation.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Uses of God's Beginning with Man to Be Reconciled

- USE 1: Admire His goodness in beginning, seeing He had no need of us, and had so great an advantage against us.
- USE 2: Begin to seek peace even with our inferiors.
- USE 3: The certainty of our salvation being reconciled.
- USE 4: Not to be backward and hang off when God calls to duty.

*T*he fourth particular propounded at the beginning of this treatise was that God begins first with man to be reconciled to Him. In this great work of making peace, it is God who begins it. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," in which part of the verse there are these four things further to be handled:

First, God begins the work. Second, it is in Christ. Third, God was doing this even from eternity. Fourth, and last, the subject of this is the world.

There was a word or two hinted of the first of these in the last chapter. It is God who begins the work of our reconciliation;

and, if He had not begun, we would never have had thoughts of it. We would never have known how to have gone reconciling ourselves to Him, and, although we could have known how to have done it, yet our stout and stubborn hearts would never have yielded to God. It is God who must begin the work. And He not only begins with us, but indeed He continues too. Although He has begun, yet if He does not go on and, after our rejecting being reconciled to Him the first, and second, and third, and fourth time, if He should not still Himself begin the work anew, again and again and again, we would never come to be reconciled to Him. I will give you but two or three passages by way of application, having treated something of this already, and so pass on.

USE 1. First, let us learn to admire the goodness of God to wretched man, His goodness that He should be pleased to begin this work of reconciliation with us, for do but consider the infinite distance that is between God and us. Oh, infinite goodness, that so great a God should begin with such a poor, vile creature as man is. Among men, if one is but a little inferior to another, and if he is fallen out with him who is beneath him, he takes it in scorn for him to begin to make peace. "No," says he, "let him come to me and seek me, if he will." If God had stood on such terms, all the children of men would have been damned eternally.

When God saw that we would perish forever, and that we would never so much as have thought of being reconciled to Him, oh, then the bowels of His compassion yearned toward us. He said, "I will begin with them first, for I see they will not begin. They indeed began to make the breach, they began to sin against Me." And that will be a second consideration which makes the grace of God so much the more: that the breach

is made on man's part, that all the wrong that is done is on man's part.

Among men, if one is great, though he himself has done the wrong, yet he expects his inferior should come and crouch to him; but if his inferior has begun the quarrel, and has done the wrong, he will be sure then to stand out and expect that his inferior should seek after a reconciliation with him. But here behold, though we began the quarrel, though we had done all the wrong and God never had done us any, yet so infinitely gracious is the Lord that He begins first. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

Yea, further, the Lord had no need of us. Among men, if one falls out with another he may perhaps say, "Well, I see I shall have use of this man. I shall have need of him for this and that business, or for such and such an employment." And on this account, though he is his inferior (for superiors may have need of their inferiors), he is willing to be reconciled to him.

But God has no such need of us. God can tell how to glorify His own name, though we all perish eternally. It is not for any use that God has of us that He comes to begin the work of reconciliation with us. Besides, God has us at infinite advantage, to do with us what He pleases. Indeed a man perhaps will be willing to be reconciled with his enemy because he sees it will cost him much to make his claim good against him; it will put him to much trouble. But there is no such cause between God and us, for God has us under His feet. If a man who has his enemy under his feet, and has him at all the advantages that can be, says he wants to be reconciled, you will say, "It is a rare thing, and where is there such a thing in the world?" But behold, God does this with us. Though He has us at infinite advantage, to do with us whatsoever He pleases, and can fetch out His glory from our ruin and eternal misery, yet He begins

the work of reconciliation with us. Oh, admire the infinite grace of God toward wretched and sinful man! This will be the work of the angels in heaven to all eternity, to admire God's rich grace even in this one branch of the gospel, His beginning the work of reconciliation.

USE 2. And, then, another use of this truth may be to teach us not to think it much, but rather to begin to seek peace even with our inferiors. We learn by the example of God that if there is a falling out between one neighbor and another, or between one friend and another, we should not think it much to begin the work of peace. We think it would be a dishonor for us to yield so far. We say, "Why, is he not my inferior, and shall I send to him?" Why, it is God's glory to do it. God not only does it to us, but he accounts it His glory so to do. It is a great part of the glory of God that He is willing to yield to us, and so send to us about terms of reconciliation. And shall that which makes God to be glorious be accounted a dishonor to you? Shall it make you unglorious when it makes God to be glorious? If it is an excellency in God, surely it is no baseness, no dishonor in you. What a proud heart you have that you should think that that debases you too much which makes God to be a glorious God, that that which sets so much glory on God should, in your thoughts, put dishonor on you, as if your honor were to be higher than the honor of God Himself. Certainly those men who are of such implacable dispositions at least will never yield to begin to make up their peace with others, but they will stand it out to the uttermost, though their consciences tell them that they themselves have done a great deal of wrong, and that they could be willing there were a peace; only they will not begin. This proud and stout spirit in men is an argument that they have not been acquainted with God's reconciling of Himself to them; for God's beginning to be reconciled to you will make

you to begin reconciliation with your inferior.

You will say, "Why should not he begin first?"

It is true, he should; it is his duty indeed, and so it is our duty to begin with God. But suppose he does not begin; you should rather pity him, and look on him in so much the more miserable condition. And know that though you have the advantage of him, yet you are to be like God in this particular.

USE 3. A third use of God's beginning the work of reconciliation with us is the use that the apostle himself makes in Romans 5:10: "If when we were enemies to God we were reconciled unto Him by the death of His Son, how much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Here you see the apostle's inference from God's graciousness in Himself. He was willing to be reconciled when we were enemies; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved. It is as if he had said, "The goodness of God towards poor, wretched, sinful creatures, when we were desperate enemies to Him, and never thought of coming in to be reconciled to Him, is such that the Lord Himself finds a way and begins the work of making peace between Him and our souls. Surely then, being reconciled to Him, we shall be saved."

What, shall God, when we were going on in a desperate way of enmity against Him—shall this God come then to us and have thoughts of peace and love and mercy toward us? Surely when we are reconciled, when we have hearts in some measure to love this God, and to serve and fear Him, He will not cast us off. Certainly not; it is better with us now than before. When we were enemies to Him, desperate enemies, it would then have been no wonder if God had cast us off and sent us to our own places to lie forever under the infinite burden of His wrath. But the Lord then had thoughts of peace towards us; it is therefore now far otherwise with us. Though it is true that we have many

corruptions in us, yet we can appeal to God that our souls love Him, and that the desire of our hearts is to fear and serve Him. We can in some measure be able to say, "Lord, Thou who knowest all things, know that there is nothing in the world our souls desire more than to overcome these corruptions. There is no burden in all the world like the burden of sin."

There is nothing so grievous to us as that we have such vile hearts and natures that can serve Him no better than we do. And if God should ask us what we would have from Him, we can say in the sincerity of our souls, "Lord, Thou knowest we would not ask for riches or honors, or to be kings and princes in the world; but oh, that we might be delivered from the remainder of corruption that is in our hearts, from such and such distempers of our souls whereby we dishonor Thy name continually."

Certainly, if the hearts of men were in this disposition, they might gather a comfortable argument to themselves and conclude: "There was a time that I went on as a desperate enemy to God. I lived without God in the world, and never minded the power and the majesty and the dominion of God over me, but I lived as if I were born to nothing else but to sin against God. I followed my own lusts with all manner of greediness, but behold, then, even at that time the Lord had thoughts of mercy towards me. He took me, perhaps, when I came to the hearing of the Word with a purpose to condemn and despise it, to jeer at it. Yet at that very time He took me and spoke to my heart and showed me Jesus Christ and His mercy, and then He broke my heart. Now the Lord knows that, though when I come to the Word I profit not as I should, yet I come with a heart desiring to profit; and I would fain know the mind of God in it. And before I come I go to God and desire Him to show me some part of His will. Will God now cast me off when, though I was a desperate enemy to Him, He had thoughts of mercy towards me? Will He

cast me off for those infirmities that I have now? I know I have not a heart opposite to that grace, though I have a heart full of distempers. I am not an enemy to God as I was before, and an enemy to His people and ordinances. No, my heart is towards Him; my heart is towards His people and His ordinances. And was God reconciled to me then, even while I was an enemy, and will He now cast me off for weaknesses and infirmities? Certainly it cannot be.”

Oh, make much of that message of the apostle: “If when we were enemies unto God we were reconciled unto Him, much more....” Certainly now God will not cast us off, but we shall be saved. That is a third use that we may make of God’s beginning the work of reconciliation.

USE 4. Was God beginning with us, and did He so begin with us? Then let not us be backward with God; let us not hang off in any duty when God calls us to do it, but presently come in. Let it not be long before we perform any duty; let us not stand out and defer with God and say, “I will, and I will hereafter.” Certainly when a soul comes to understand the goodness of God, how God began with us in making peace before ever we had thoughts of it, it will be a mighty argument to put the soul to the doing of any duty which God calls for, and to be speedy in the service of God, because He was pleased at first to begin.

But we must move beyond the exposition of God’s beginning to be reconciled to us, and come to that which is indeed the main point of reconciliation in the text, and even the principal of all the doctrines in the gospel: that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

Our Reconciliation with God Is Made in Christ

*Y*ou have read much of the blessedness of reconciliation, what a happy condition it is to be at peace with God, especially in these times of war and trouble when there is so little peace in the land. And you have read that God begins the work, but how does He do it? Observe, it is not God merely considered as Creator of heaven and earth, that infinite First Being of all things, but the first thing propounded in the first chapter was that it was God in Christ reconciling Himself to the world. God and man were enemies, and a breach there was, and the breach was infinitely wide and dreadful. How shall God and man now come to be reconciled?

You will say, “The Lord is a God of infinite mercy, and He sees His poor creatures must perish eternally if He comes to take advantage against them. Therefore it may be that God was willing to pass by all, and so free Himself and His own free grace to be reconciled to such and such creatures as have sinned against Him, and in this way reconciliation was made up.”

No, this was not the way; there is more required than this. Let God and the creature be put together without any further consideration, with all the mercy of God on the one side and

all the cries, tears and repentings of the creature on the other side, and this will never make up a peace. This you must know is the doctrine of the gospel: man has made a breach between God and himself. And consider God merely in Himself, as He is Himself, without relation to a Mediator; and then take all the mercy of God on one side and all the tears and repentings, the cries and prayers of the creature, on the other side; and both these together can never make peace.

“What must there be more?” you will say. It is that which we have in the text: God in Christ reconciling the world. It is not God in Himself reconciling the world to Himself, but it is God in Christ. So there must come something between God and us as to the matter of reconciliation, or else there can never be a reconciliation made.

This thing I have often had occasion to treat, and I am very willing on every occasion to set this before those to whom I am to preach; for this is the great truth of the gospel, and truly all our preaching should be to bring this truth home to the hearts of people. And whatsoever we preach, if it is not toward this end, we lose our labor. God has little glory from what we do unless it is to this end, or as it may be in some way a fruit of it. So then the point is this:

DOCTRINE. Our reconciliation with God is made in Christ.

We read of Jonah that when the storms and tempests were in the sea, and when the waves roared and the ship and the mariners were all likely to be swallowed up, when Jonah was cast into the sea, presently there was a calm. So the storms and tempests of God’s everlasting wrath are up against a sinner, and the waves of that wrath are ready to swallow him up. But now Christ is cast into the heart of a man, and, Christ being presented

as one standing between God and man, all comes to be calm. The disciples were on the sea, and the sea was troublesome; yet when Christ came, and rebuked the sea and the winds, all was still. So it is with troubles of conscience: nothing can rebuke those, nothing can bring in peace and quiet into the soul but Christ coming into the heart. God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.

There is nothing more plain in Scripture than that it is God in Christ who reconciles the world to Himself. It is evident enough in the text, but I will give you a Scripture or two for it, and then proceed to the opening of the point. Romans 5:1 is most clear: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." How? "Through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no peace with God but through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an easy matter for us to say so, but to apprehend the necessity of this, that it must be through our Lord Jesus Christ that we have peace with God—to apprehend this clearly and thoroughly is a great matter. And those know much of the mind of God who know this experimentally and powerfully: "In Jesus Christ you who were far off are made nigh through His blood, for He is our peace" (Ephesians 2:13–14).

This is spoken in two regards. He is our peace with God, and it is apparent that it must be spoken in that regard, for so it follows in verse 18: "Through Him we have access unto the Father." But it is also spoken of Christ's being our peace with regard to uniting us to the church of God, to be made one with the people of God. "But, no," says God, "here is a reconciliation"—both a reconciliation with God and then a union with the people of God, with the church of God. The partition wall is broken down through Christ, and those who were as dogs before are now set up at the table. And there is a peace made between God's people and us, for Christ makes peace in that way in taking away

the enmity, so that the people of God might be one together as well as being one with God. So also Colossians 1:21–22: “You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.” How? “In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and unreprouable in His sight.” And verse 20 is remarkable for this purpose: “Having made peace.” How? “Through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself.” So the apostle would put an emphasis on this, that we are reconciled by Christ; “By Him,” says he. And he was not satisfied in saying it once, but he repeats it again: “By Him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven.”

There are two difficulties in this Scripture. First, it says, “God has reconciled all things to Himself in Christ.” How does God reconcile all things to Himself in Christ? We are now speaking of reconciling those who shall be saved eternally; but here the apostle speaks of reconciling all things. God may be said to reconcile not only saints, but all things to Himself in this regard, in that all things were liable to destruction through man’s sin. And it is in Christ and through Christ that anything in the world is preserved in a good condition. When you behold the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all these things, and see the preservation of them in any good condition, you must know it is all through Christ. And had it not been in regard of Christ, all things would have come to ruin and confusion presently. So God reconciles all things to Himself in Christ.

Further, all things are reconciled in Christ in this regard: now all things that are through Him come to be made serviceable to those who are His saints and reconciled ones. And in that regard all things may be said to be reconciled to God, because they are reconciled to God’s friends, whereas before, all creatures were enemies to us through sin. And now

through Christ they come to be made useful to us, and so to God by us.

A second difficulty in this text is how God has by Christ reconciled all things in heaven. What things are there in heaven that are reconciled to God by Christ? We must understand that the things in heaven that are said to be reconciled are especially to be meant of the angels.

But you will say, "How can the angels be reconciled to Christ? There was never a falling out, never an enmity between God and them!"

I answer that, though in a proper sense, as reconciliation concerns man, there is no reconciling of angels to God, yet there is a nearer, further, and firmer union made between God and the angels through Jesus Christ than ever there was before, or than ever there would have been, for all we know, if Christ had not come. In that regard reconciliation may be said to be of things in heaven. God and they are now, by Christ, more firmly made one than ever they were before. And again, though the angels had never sinned against God, and so were no actual enemies to God, yet they were in a capacity of sinning, for they, being but creatures, could not but be frail in themselves, and so liable to fall from God and to sin against Him as well as those who fell. Therefore, with regard to the establishment which they have now through Jesus Christ, because they are now confirmed in such a condition that they are in an impossibility of falling from God—God having so taken them to Himself, and they being so one with God, that they can never fall from Him—in this regard also they may be said to be reconciled. For, notwithstanding all the perfection of their creation, they might have fallen into the same condition that those did who are now reserved in chains to the judgment of the great day. But now God has so reconciled all things in heaven by Jesus

Christ that the angels themselves are more firmly made one with God than they were before.

And further, the Lord receives them into a more entire affection of love in and by Jesus Christ than He did before. Now that the Lord looks on the angels in and through Christ, He has a more thorough, firm, intimate, entire affection towards them, to establish them and accept them in Jesus Christ. And besides, they are reconciled to God, or to us rather, because they have come to be our friends, whereas at first they were our enemies. So that in that regard there is a kind of reconciliation. But because I conceive the text does not so much intend that, we shall let it pass.

Thus you see how God was in Christ reconciling to Himself, even in some sense, the very angels themselves. This, then is the first thing: the very thought that God had of entering into any terms or parley with man about peace is by Christ. That the Lord's heart was inclined to man is from Christ; that the Lord would be willing to accept any satisfaction is through Christ; that we have an access to God in any way is through Christ. There is nothing from the one end of the work of reconciliation to the other but is all through Christ.

For further opening of this great point, there are these things to be propounded:

First, briefly, to show you the necessity of Christ's coming in order for our reconciliation with God, and, likewise, that it could be in no other way but by Christ.

Second, how Christ comes to be a fit reconciler.

Third, what it is that Christ has engaged Himself to and performed according to His engagement for our reconciliation.

Fourth, how that which Christ has done comes to be made over to us, and how we come to have the fruit of it for our reconciliation with God.

Fifth, the consequences that flow from this, namely that our reconciliation comes through Christ.

Sixth, the reasons why God will be reconciled to us through His Son rather than in any other way.

And, last, to make some applications of all this.

These particulars might hold us some time, but—because we often meet with much of this doctrine of reconciliation, and have divers times before, and are likely, if God lengthens our opportunities, still to do it—therefore I intend to present all these seven particulars before you in a very short view.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Necessity of Christ's Coming for Our Reconciliation

*F*irst, let us examine the necessity of Christ's coming for our reconciliation; and surely this is that which is to be inculcated and beaten on you again and again, for you neither know God nor Christ nor your own state unless you know the necessity of Christ's coming to undertake the work of reconciliation. I suppose if we should ask any of you how you hope to be saved, you would immediately answer, "by Jesus Christ!" But the understanding of the absolute necessity of Christ's coming to reconcile us and God together is not so ordinary; therefore I beseech you seriously to weigh it. The necessity of it in a word is this: there was such a distance made between God and His creatures through sin as put a necessity on a mediator to come between them. The distance was so great, for God being the infinite First Being, and we being His creatures, the distance must be great.

It is sin that made the distance between God and us; and that was so vast and wide that it necessarily required a mediator to come between, and especially on this ground: because the Lord was resolved to have the wrong that was done to Him by the sin of man perfectly made up. Sin had wronged God, and

God was resolved on it, He was set on it, to have this wrong completely made up, and that He Himself would be perfectly righted. This God's justice calls for, and thus stood the terms between God and man, man having wronged God. God and he are now at variance, and God stands on it, and is resolved with Himself: "Though I am willing to be at peace with them, yet I will be at peace with them so as I will have the wrong that is done made up. My justice shall be fully and completely satisfied. I must be righted, for I am God; and there shall not be such a flaw remaining in My justice to eternity as such and such creatures should sin against Me and I pass it by without having any satisfaction." God says, "This would be a flaw in My justice forever, and that I will not have. And therefore I will be righted in the wrong that is done to Me by the fall of man."

It is true that, when one man comes to treat about peace and reconciliation with another, it is sometimes necessary for him to pass by an offense without any satisfaction at all, especially when that poor creature who has offended is not able to make satisfaction. But it is not so between God and man. Though one man is at variance with another, when he sees that he who has done him wrong cannot make satisfaction, he then may indeed pass it by. But God's mercy never worked after that manner. Though the mercy in a man may bring him to such a reconciliation, and though God is a God of infinite mercy, infinitely more merciful than any creature can be, yet the way of the working of God's mercy is different from the working of the creature's mercy. This does not argue that there is not as much mercy in God as there is in the creature, but that the way God's mercy works is different from that of the creatures. The way of God's mercy is not to pass by the wrong done, but to provide some means or other Himself to satisfy that wrong, to the end that He may have His justice satisfied. And because this was

necessary, hence it comes to pass that we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

The necessity of Christ's being a mediator is not so much because we are grievous sinners and have need of an abundance of mercy from God. If there were nothing but these two factors only, that we are great sinners and so need great mercy, there would not come a necessity of Christ. But we are great sinners, and we have need of the mercy of God, and the wrong that sin has done to God must be made up and His justice fully satisfied. Here is where the necessity of a Christ comes in.

And thus God was reconciling Himself to the world in this regard. And, the truth is, though some of you have heard the sound of this many times, yet you must know this is the great mystery of the gospel, and, by our presenting this to you again and again, perhaps God will give you a further insight into this truth. It is this that the angels desire so much to pry into. They know that God's justice must be satisfied, but they know it not so as the church and the saints know it. Therefore they pry more and more into it to see the further depths of it.

There are greater and greater depths in this mystery which we can never fathom, and which are only reserved for the time of the resurrection. Most people think that when they are to seek for reconciliation with God they have to do with God only as a merciful God; but you must know that when you have to deal with God about reconciliation, you have to do with more than with the mercy of God. You have to do with God reconciling Himself to the world in His Son, and you can never seek reconciliation with God in a right evangelical way, unless you seek it in His Son. That briefly shall suffice for the first point, the necessity of Christ's coming to do the work of reconciliation.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

How Christ Comes to Be a Fit Reconciler

1. Because He is the second person in the Trinity
2. He has taken our nature on Him
3. He knows fully the mind of the Father
4. He fully knows what will satisfy the Father
5. God the Father infinitely loves Him
6. He never offended the Father
7. What He does has infinite efficacy and worth

*T*he second thing propounded in the twelfth chapter is how Christ comes to be a fit reconciler. It is He who is the great Peacemaker, and therefore in the Scripture He is called “the Prince of peace.” It is He who is Melchizedek, the King of righteousness and King of peace; but how comes He to be so? By being a mediator between the Father and us. And you shall find He is called such in the Scripture: “But He has obtained a more excellent ministry by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant” (Hebrews 8:6), that is, of a covenant of grace and not of that covenant of works. Christ is a fit mediator to come in and mediate between God and us.

When there is a breach between two men and they are at

a distance, the breach is such as requires one to come in and mediate between them. It is not always necessary between man and man where there is a breach that one should come and mediate, but, there being a breach between God and us, it was absolutely necessary that a mediator should come in to treat between God and us; and there could never have been the least parley and treaty between God and fallen man had not a mediator stepped in between. This Mediator is Jesus Christ, and it is He only who is fit to be our reconciler and peacemaker:

1. Because He is the second person in the Trinity, and in that regard He is fit.

QUESTION. You will say, "How does this make Him fit?"

ANSWER. The sin that was committed in the first transgression was more directly against the first person, God the Father.

"Why," you will say, "was it against one person rather than against another?"

It was indeed against them all, but it was more directly against the first person because man's first sin was against that perfection which God gave him in His creation, against that created righteousness that was put into him, which was especially the work of the first person in the Trinity. For creation is attributed to the first person, and man sinned against that work of creation. Hence it comes to pass that the first person is more directly and immediately offended. Now, therefore, the second person in the Trinity comes next in order, and therefore it is He who is fit to be a reconciler between the Father and us. Because we have sinned against the work of creation, God the Father, to whom that work is attributed, is more especially offended.

2. But not only so, for if He had been but only the second person, if He had been but only the Son of God, He could not have been the reconciler of us to God; and therefore there must be something else. When we ask you who Christ is, you ordinarily answer, "The Son of God." But if that had been all, if He had been only the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, He could not (according to that way which God has revealed in His Word that He will be reconciled to sinners by) have been a fit mediator for us.

Therefore, in the second place, that He might be a fit mediator to make our peace and reconcile God and us together, He came and took our nature upon Him and was made a very man, so that the same person is now God and man, having taken up the human nature into a personal union with the Son of God. Thus He partakes of both those natures which are to be reconciled.

Observe it well. The business of Christ, who is to be the reconciler, is to reconcile God and man, between whom there was so vast a breach. Now to the end that He might be fit for this work and reconcile these two, God and man, He partakes of both natures and becomes, by uniting the nature of man which He took to Himself into personal union with the Godhead, both God and man. And having the nature of them both, He has interest in them both. He has interest in God the Father, being the same God, coequal with the Father—though not the same in a personal regard, but the same God with the Father. And thus He has interest likewise in man, as He has the same nature with Him. Partaking of God and man, He comes to have interest in both, and in that regard becomes a fit mediator between God and us.

Here is the great work of God: to reconcile man to Himself. And in this God must do a work that is far greater than

making heaven and earth. It would not have been so great a work for God to have made ten thousand worlds over again as for God to make a mediator to become God and man in one person. The union of the two natures of Christ is the greatest work that ever God did from all eternity, or ever shall be done. And yet this was required to reconcile us to Himself. Surely you may well conclude that the work of reconciliation of a sinner to God is a greater business, seeing that heaven and earth must be moved for it; and the greatest work that ever was done, or ever shall be done, must be done for this purpose or else it would have never been effected. The second person in the Trinity must come and take our nature, and be made in the form of a servant, that He might be a fit peacemaker or mediator between God the Father and us.

Third, Christ is a fit mediator in that He knows fully the mind of the Father, and thoroughly understands, even to the utmost, what wrong the Father has received by our sin. If one should come to mediate between one man and another, and should desire the party offended to be at peace, he will say, "You speak this unto me, but do you know what wrong such a one has done me? If you understood the wrong he has done me, surely you would not think it so easy a matter for me to be at peace."

And, the truth is, if all the angels in heaven and all the men in the world should come to interpose and make peace between God and any sinner for any one sin, God would presently answer them and say, "What, do you come to undertake this work of making peace with Me and a sinner? Alas, you do not understand what wrong is done to Me by his sin. You know not what injury I have received by his sin; therefore you are not a fit party to be a mediator."

And in this regard no angel in heaven could possibly be a fit peacemaker between God and man, for they know not

what wrong sin has done to God. But Jesus Christ knows to the utmost. He understands thoroughly and fully all the wrong and injury that is done to the Father by the sin of man; He knows what prejudice His Father sustained by all the sins of all the men of the world, which no creature else, neither angels nor men, could ever do. No, they are so far from knowing the wrong that is done to God by the sins of the world, that they are not able to understand the wrong that is done to God by one of the least sins that can be committed.

Fourth, Christ is a fit mediator because He fully knew what would please and satisfy His Father. If a man should come to be a mediator, to reconcile two who are at odds, if indeed he knew the mind of the party offended fully and thoroughly, we would rather choose such a man to make up the breach; such a man indeed who understands to a hair what will satisfy the offended party is fit to be a mediator. All the angels in heaven do not know like Jesus Christ, fully and thoroughly, the mind of God, or what it is that will satisfy Him. It is only Jesus Christ, who was with the Father and lay in His very bosom from all eternity, who knows fully what will satisfy the wrong that is done to the Father. And therefore He alone was most fit to undertake this work.

Fifth, Christ is a fit mediator in that God the Father infinitely loves Him. He is infinitely dear to the Father, and you know that it is a special ingredient for those to have who are to be reconciled that they should be dear to one another, especially dear to the party who is offended. If a poor man has offended a rich man in a town, and he says to himself, "Oh, that I were reconciled to such a one!" if he can get one who is an intimate friend with that rich man to speak to him on his behalf, he will conclude that certainly the business shall have good success, and that this friend will prevail.

Thus it is with our mediator. He who is our reconciler to God is infinitely dear to the Father. God the Father infinitely delights in Him, and, therefore, whatsoever He shall say or do must infinitely please God the Father. This is our mediator who has come to reconcile us to God. He can say and do nothing but what shall infinitely please and delight the Father.

Further, He is one who never offended. There may be a friend who is very dear to the party offended, and yet, perhaps, he himself has offended the party. But Jesus Christ is one who never offended the Father, but has pleased Him from all eternity. Therefore He is a fit mediator. He is fit to speak for those who have displeased Him.

In a family, if a child has offended, and another child comes and speaks for his brother, the father may answer, "You must speak for yourself, for you have offended as well as he." But if another child who never offended his father in all his life, and has been the most obedient child in the world, shall come and speak, this will likely move the father much. God the Father professes before all the world that Jesus Christ is His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, and it is this Christ who stands up to speak to God the Father for poor sinners to be reconciled to Him.

Last, He is a fit mediator in that whatsoever He shall do has an infinite efficacy in itself. Not only is He a fit mediator because God is pleased with Him, but because whatsoever He shall lay down by way of satisfaction has an infinite value in it. There is such an infinite worth in whatsoever Christ lays down to purchase this reconciliation that the infinite justice of God cannot but say, "This is indeed a valuable consideration, and I cannot but acknowledge there is an efficacy and sufficiency enough in this to make up a full satisfaction, had the sins of men been a thousand times more than they were."

Now, what a mediator we have to reconcile us to God! How our sins come to make such a breach between God and us! But because our sins were against such an infinite God at first, the person against whom we have sinned is the cause which makes such a breach; and so the person who is the mediator—who shall do and suffer anything for us—being such a person as he is, hence comes the efficacy of all that He shall do and suffer to satisfy the Father to the utmost.

Put all this together: Christ is the second person in the Trinity; Christ is God and man; Christ knows the mind of the Father to the fullest; Christ knows what wrong our sins have done to the Father; Christ knows what will satisfy the Father; Christ never offended the Father; and Christ is infinitely beloved of the Father. All these together make it so that whatsoever He does has an infinite efficacy to satisfy justice itself; and in this regard He comes to be a fit mediator. All these things rather encourage the heart of poor sinners to come to Him, seeing it is God in Christ who reconciles us to Himself.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*What Christ Has
Undertaken and Performed
in Our Reconciliation*

1. To satisfy God's justice.
2. To bring our hearts and subdue them to God.

*Y*ou will say, "You have shown us that it is not God alone and us, but God in Christ Christ and us who are reconciled. And you have shown us what a reconciler Christ is, and how fit He is. But as for the third thing propounded in chapter 12, has Christ undertaken to reconcile us?"

Surely, in this great work of coming and reconciling sinful man to God, Christ must undertake much in this. I will declare to you what Christ has undertaken.

1. There is this agreement between Christ and the Father: He has undertaken that He will satisfy whatever His Father's justice shall require. Suppose one should come to make peace between a couple, and the one party has extremely injured the other. He who comes to make peace does not only come and say, "Sir, I beseech you, for my sake, pass by the wrong and be

reconciled to him.” This may do much, but it will not complete the deed.

And this is not the way of reconciling God and us, for Christ (though He is dear to the Father) only to plead and say, “O Father, these poor creatures have offended Thee. I beseech Thee, O Father, be reconciled to them.” No, this is not enough.

But the party offended says, “Will you undertake to satisfy the wrong that is done me?”

“Aye,” says he who is the peacemaker, “I will undertake it all. You shall set it all upon my score.”

And certainly you will all conclude that if he who comes to be the mediator, and is dear to the party offended, shall not only entreat, but undertake that—whatsoever he would have of him, or require what satisfaction soever he will, he will undertake to undergo it all—especially if he is a man able to do what he promises, you will all conclude that this will surely make peace.

This is the transaction between God the Father and the Son. God looks on man as being an enemy to Him, and Christ comes to mediate. “But,” says the Father, “what wilt Thou do to make peace? Wilt Thou undertake for mankind, wilt Thou engage to satisfy that wrong that they have done Me?”

“Yes, O Father,” says Christ, “I will do it. I will stand between Thee and them, and undertake for them to satisfy whatsoever Thy justice can require.”

And in this regard Christ is not only called a mediator in Hebrews 8:6, but He is called a surety because He has undertaken to satisfy what God the Father required for the sin of mankind. And as He has undertaken it, so He has done it now. The people who lived in former times might look on God reconciling Himself to the world in Christ as if Christ had undertaken, but not fully discharged it. But we may look upon Christ not only as an undertaker, but as one who has discharged and paid all.

2. But that is not all. Christ has not only undertaken this, but in the next place, He has undertaken to satisfy God on His part.

Says the Father, "What shall become of these poor creatures? They have hearts opposite to Me, and they are enemies to Me, and whatsoever you do they will still on in ways of enmity to Me."

"No," says Christ, "I will do more than this. I will undertake to bring them in and subdue their hearts to Thee; and whereas they are now enemies to Thee, they shall come and submit themselves. That wicked nature of theirs I will take away through My Spirit, and I will bring them into a peaceable disposition towards Thee, so that they shall love Thee as a friend, and love all that belongs to Thee. They shall love all Thy ways, love Thy people, and love Thy holiness. I will undertake to bring them in to Thee as well as to satisfy Thee for what they have done."

This is apparent, for in the Scripture, wherever there is any speaking of reconciliation, there is mentioned our being reconciled to God as well as God's being reconciled to us. Indeed, the Scripture makes more mention of our reconciliation, being enemies to God, than of anything of God's working reconciliation for us.

That passage that I quoted before, Colossians 1:20–21, is exceedingly clear in indicating what Christ has undertaken for our reconciliation: "He has made peace through the blood of His cross." He has undertaken to satisfy, and the undertaking of it cost Him His blood; our reconciliation cost Christ's death. But then in verse 21 it says further, "You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works." So it is in your Bibles, but in the original it is "enemies in your minds in wicked works." Not that you came to be enemies by your works, for that is the advantage indeed that the adversaries have. You might say, "It is not a sinful nature in us, but we come by action

to act wicked habits.” But it is “you are enemies in your minds in works.” That is, you laid out all the enmity in your minds against God. You have natural enmity in your minds against God, and in your minds you lay out and improve this strength of your enmity in your wicked works against God.

“But,” says the passage, “you that were thus alienated, and enemies in your minds in wicked works He has reconciled, to present you holy, blameless, and unreprouable in His sight.” Here are two ways by which Christ reconciles us to God: He has reconciled us by the blood of His cross, and also in the body of His flesh through death to present us holy, blameless, and unreprouable in His sight. He has undertaken the latter as well as that other, and He has undertaken that we shall not remain enemies to God eternally, but that there shall be a time when we shall be brought in to God and have gracious dispositions put into us. So we shall become friends to God, and friends to all who are God’s.

There are many who speak of Christ in regard of His satisfaction, and what the transaction was between God and Him, and they think that because Christ has undertaken to satisfy God’s wrath, we need not care for anything. “What if we live as we wish? It is to no purpose what we do, whether we do ill or whether we do well, for Christ has done all in the work of reconciliation.”

But, my brethren, see the mistake. Christ has not only undertaken satisfaction, and to reconcile God to us, but He has undertaken with God the Father likewise to reconcile us to Him—not to satisfy God alone, but to bring us to a gracious frame and disposition of heart likewise. And therefore, unless Christ does both, the truth is that He does neither. It is true, the one may be done from all eternity. Christ may undertake the one, and undertake that He will do the other also. But until

Christ has actually done the other, you cannot conclude that He has done the former.

The man who persuades himself that Jesus Christ has done the former, when He has not done the latter, deceives himself. Therefore, to believe in Christ as a reconciler is to believe in Christ as undertaking these two things: first, undertaking with God the Father to make satisfaction to Him, and then, second, undertaking for us to bring us in to the Father likewise. And as Christ must do the one as well as the other, so He will be as faithful in performing the second as He was in undertaking and discharging the first.

Few people think of this. They think much of Christ's undertaking to satisfy God's justice, and so to reconcile them to God, but they seldom have thoughts of this, that Christ has also undertaken to change their hearts and make them friends to God. You who go on in wicked works, being enemies to God in your minds in wicked works, perhaps you think God will be reconciled to you through Christ, and when you die you shall be saved through Him. Remember this point: Christ the reconciler has undertaken with God the Father both to satisfy His justice and to subdue your hearts so that you shall no longer be enemies to Him. And therefore, if Christ has not done the other in your hearts, it is an evident argument that, for all that yet appears, He never undertook to satisfy the justice of God for you.

Oh, what an argument is here for men to be restless and unquiet in their natural condition! You who go on in a sinful and ungodly way, you may certainly know that there is for the present no evidence that Jesus Christ has undertaken with the Father to make any reconciliation for you; for, if He has, He has also undertaken on your part to bring in your hearts to the Father and make you friends with Him, as well as making Him friends with you.

On the other hand, some of you may find the work of the Spirit in your hearts; you begin to find Christ subduing your hearts to God. Whereas before you lived in ways of enmity to God, now you begin to find the power of Christ in His Word beating down those proud hearts of yours. You find Christ changing your minds, and so bringing your hearts into subjection to God. Bless God for this, and know that this is part of Christ's undertaking with God the Father, and if He does this in your hearts, it is an evidence that He has undertaken to satisfy God's justice for all your sins. Thus you see how Christ functions as a reconciler and a mediator.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

How What Christ Has Done for Our Reconciliation Comes to Be Made Ours

*T*here is a fourth thing which I propounded in the twelfth chapter; and this is how we come to be reconciled to God in Christ. It is true, Christ has done it; but how do we come to have what Christ has done made ours so that we may be reconciled to God?

In a word, Christ is looked upon by God the Father as the Head of the second covenant, and so we are looked on in Him as covenanters, and as joined together in one body in Him. This is the way of Christ's reconciling God and us, and the way of the conveyance of all the fruits of that reconciliation to us. This is the counsel of God concerning the children of men, that they may come to be reconciled and saved. As His Son has undertaken these things, He does not simply stand between the Father and us. Rather, there must be a union between Him and us, and He must present us to God the Father as one body with Himself, and the Father must look on Him as the Head of a covenant to which we belong likewise.

So His obedience and suffering are to be looked on now

not as done by a private person, but as the obedience and suffering of a public person, of one who bears our names before God the Father. And herein there is a further mystery of godliness. Reconciliation between man and man requires simply that one who is a stranger comes and stands between and mediates. There is not required such a union between him for whom he mediates and himself. But Christ comes not merely as a third person between God and us, but He comes to take our very natures on Him; and we are made one in the covenant of grace, He as the Head and we as the members. As Adam stood before God as the head of the first covenant of works (and so we were all looked on at first in him, and died in him), so Christ, who is called the second Adam, stands before the Lord as the Head of the second covenant; and all those whom He mediates for, and whom He seeks to reconcile to the Father, stand before the Father in Him. So that His work is imputed to be theirs, and the Lord looks on them in their Head, fulfilling that second covenant of life and peace that He has made with poor creatures in Him.

So you must not only look on Christ as a Savior, as the Son of God in heaven, but if you would look on Him with comfort you must look on Him as the Head of the second covenant, and on your lives as joined with Him, as members of Him, and so presented to the Father through Him. Thus God was in Christ reconciling Himself to the world, God looking on and through Christ as the Head of the covenant of grace. All those for whom Christ undertook, as covenanters joined together with Him, come to be reconciled, all those who shall be everlastingly saved. This is the mystery of the gospel: God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. What Christ has been opened, and so you must search into what Christ has undertaken, and how God looks on us through this mediator, and cry

to God that by His Spirit He would open these mysteries of the gospel to you. Then you shall see much of the mystery of grace and the mind of God, and so come to have an abundance of peace with God, notwithstanding all the present remainders of uncleanness that are in your hearts.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

How We Come to Have Interest in What Christ has Done Is Further Opened

*W*e have shown in the former chapter what Christ does for the continuance of this peace between God and us, that He is at the right hand of God, there making intercession for the saints continually. So if there is anything that might (in its own nature) break the peace between God and us, our Mediator sits at the right hand of the Father and there (by His intercession) continually presents Himself to remove it. He does this for the continuance of the peace between God and us, so that no breach may fall out for the time to come. This, I say, Christ undertakes to do, and this is a special work of His mediation, namely His being continually at the right hand of the Father, and there presenting Himself to God for the keeping and maintaining of the peace which He has made between the Father and us.

Again, it may be demanded how we come to have an interest in what Christ does (which was the fourth thing propounded in the twelfth chapter) in His satisfaction, in all that He undertakes.

The answer is this: Christ is made the Head of the second covenant; for as the foundation of the breach that was between God and us at first came by the first man Adam, who was the head of the first covenant, in whom we all sinned and so became enemies to God, so Jesus Christ is made a second Adam and the Head of a second covenant. And all those who are looked on as the posterity of the second Adam (for so it must be) are looked on as one in Him. As all who were of the posterity of the first Adam were looked on as one man in him, and so the breach was made and enmity came between God and all that one man's posterity, so all who are to be of the posterity of the second Adam, who are either actually of Him or are to be born of Him by a spiritual generation (which in the Scripture is termed "regeneration"), are looked on as one with Him.

Therefore it is that in 1 Corinthians 15:47 the apostle speaks of the first and second Adam as if there were no more than two men in the world, for indeed there are no more in that sense, nor ever were. The first man (says the apostle) is of the earth, earthly; the second man is the Lord from heaven, heavenly. Here are the first man and the second man.

"Why," you will say, "are there but two men in the world?"

No, not in that sense; but there were never only two men who did represent all others, and under these two men are all other men in the world represented before God. All the children of men who fell from God are represented before God. All the children of men who fell from God are represented in the first Adam, who was the head of the first covenant, and they stand under that covenant. And all those whom God intends to be reconciled to and to glorify are represented before God in the second Adam who is the Head of the second covenant.

It is true, if we speak that Cain was chronologically the second man in the world; but Christ is the second man, that is, the

Head of a second covenant, the second man that God entered into covenant with for other men; and in that sense He alone was the second man. In the same sense Adam is called the first man so that God is reconciled to the world in Christ; that is, as in the first Adam the breach was made between God and man, so in the second Adam reconciliation is made between God and man. And as God imputes that which the first Adam did to his posterity for condemnation, so that which the second Adam did He imputes to the posterity of that second Adam for life and reconciliation. This is all more fully discussed in the latter portion of Romans 5.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Eight Consequences of Our Reconciliation Being Made in Christ

1. It is a deep mystery
2. It is very free
3. It is sure and certain
4. It is full
5. It is an honorable way
6. Yet it is in such a way as debases man
7. It is firm and everlasting
8. This reconciliation was a very difficult work

*W*e must still cover the fifth and sixth particulars mentioned in the twelfth chapter that follow in the explication of this point of reconciliation with God in Christ; and when we have finished them we shall come to the application of all the six things.

And the fifth is some consequences that follow from what has been spoken. For if we are reconciled to God in Christ, we may from thence draw divers consequences. I shall not now do it by way of application, but only show you how such

consequences as I shall name naturally flow from what has been said. For if the reconciliation between God and us is in Christ, then these consequences may be derived concerning it:

CONSEQUENCE 1. First, therefore, it follows that the reconciliation of the children of men with God is a very great and deep mystery. It is not a thing that can ordinarily be understood; it is not a thing wrought in a natural way. But to reconcile any soul to God is done in a way that is most deep and hidden and is (of itself) a most glorious mystery. And therefore, when the Scripture speaks of our reconciliation with God in Jesus Christ, it tells us that it is the hidden wisdom of God. "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom of God ordained before the world to our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). It speaks of the very same thing that my text speaks of, namely that "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Jesus Christ," and this He says was the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory. And then again in verse 10: "God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit." The particle "them" is not in the Greek, which reads simply "God has revealed to us by His Spirit," that is, this mystery. "For the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God." That is the first consequence: it is a mystery.

CONSEQUENCE 2. Therefore our reconciliation with God is very free; it is a work of free grace; it is God reconciling Himself in Christ; it is not God reconciling Himself to us for what we do ourselves, or for what we can do. No, there is nothing that we do or can do, nothing that angels do or can do for us, that can reconcile us to God; but we are reconciled to God in Christ. Therefore the work of reconciling us is nothing but free grace. We do not contribute anything at all to this great work; it is all done in Christ; it is altogether free. If there is anything required

of us, yet it must be God and Christ who must work it all. Everything of our reconciliation (whatsoever particular there is in it) is all in Christ, and therefore altogether free grace towards us. Christ is the gift of God, and everything that is indeed in Him and by Him is a free gift to us. That is the second thing that may be said of this reconciliation: it is free.

CONSEQUENCE 3. The third thing that may be said of it is that it is sure and certain; there is a certainty, a sureness of this reconciliation. Why? Because God has wrought so strangely about the work, and He would never proceed so strangely about such a work but He would have it come to something. He would not have this work (after He has done all) to vanish. Those indeed who hold the doctrine of free will, who say that indeed a price has been paid on condition that we believe, but we are left to ourselves either to believe or not believe, and God only propounds the means—what do they teach but this much? They are saying in effect that after all the counsels of God that are wrought for our reconciliation, and after those great things which God has done for us in Christ, it is in the power of man to make all to be void and of no effect, and that there could not be any one man in the world reconciled at last; for it must follow that if it is left to man to believe or not believe, and if it is in his power whether he will or not, then it is in his power likewise to make all the counsels of God and the great works of God in Christ to be of no effect at all. They would have us believe that after God has from eternity plotted the work, and sent His own Son into the world to be made a curse for the sin of man, to die and to make all that ado, and all that work about the matter of reconciliation and atonement, yet (if their doctrine were true which is a Beelzebub error, in a fallen doctrine of the greatest magnitude) it would still be possible that (notwithstanding the doing of all this) all could be lost, and

Christ might have died in vain, and not one soul in the world would be saved.

I say, all this would logically follow from that doctrine. But now if we hear that so much done has been done to make our peace and reconciliation with God, then, on the other side, it must necessarily follow and certainly be concluded that there are some who are to be reconciled to God, and that this work shall never be lost. God will never plot so great a work and send His Son into the world to do so much as He did for the sin of man, and at last suffer it all to be lost; but He will certainly bring some unto salvation.

I confess, when a poor sinner who is made sensible of what sin is, and of the breach that sin has made between him and God, thinks of the greatness of the work and what it is to be reconciled to God, he trembles and shakes in himself, fearing the good news is too good to be true, and that it may not be certain and true. Yes, but when he comes to understand what God has done for the accomplishment of that work—how God not only has promised it but, we can say now, that it is done, that the Lord has indeed sent His Son into the world and that He is made man, and that He has been under the curse of God for man's sins, and He has been crucified, dead, and buried, and is ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father, and all those glorious mysteries of the gospel (spoken of in the Old Testament) are now fulfilled and accomplished—when a sinner comes to understand this, oh, then he thinks, “Surely there is a certainty of sureness in this work of reconciliation with God.”

When Jacob heard that Joseph, his son (whom he loved), was yet alive, the text says, “The heart of the old man failed” (Genesis 45:26). He did not believe it; he thought it was too good to be true. But when his other sons came and showed

him the chariots that Joseph had sent, and gave him such real demonstration of the thing, not only that he was alive, but that he was the greatest man in Egypt and next to Pharaoh himself, then the text says that “The spirit of Jacob revived, and he said, ‘Is Joseph my son alive? I have enough.’”

So when a sinner comes to be made sensible of the evil of sin, and the greatness and wideness of the breadth that is between God and him, and when he comes and hears someone preach on the doctrine of reconciliation, and of atonement between God and the soul, and how all his sins may be pardoned, and how God may become a friend to him, and he may come to be saved and glorified eternally in the highest heaven, the heart of that poor sinner begins to fail. But when we can tell him what great things God has done to bring this work about, that God has in His infinite wisdom found out such a glorious way for reconciliation, that He has sent His Son, and He has become man, and has been under the wrath of His Father and satisfied for man’s sin, and died and shed His blood, and is now ascended into heaven, and is at the right hand of the Father, and is an advocate and an intercessor—on this the sinner may come to believe that there is a reality in the thing, a certainty in this work of reconciliation.

My brethren, the work of reconciliation is a sure thing indeed. It is not a notion, fancy, or imagination, but there is a reality and a certainty in it. And all this follows from hence: it is in Christ. We could never be so certain of the thing unless we had these real demonstrations of God’s heart toward us. Suppose God had sent an angel from heaven to preach to the children of men the doctrine of reconciliation, and to tell them that God was willing to be reconciled to them. Alas, this could never be made out to be so certain to them; but still the hearts of poor sinners would have been afraid, and would have

thought, "Surely whatsoever is said to us is but a little to quiet us for the present. Certainly the matter is not as it is declared to us." This would not have been so certain, though an angel from heaven had declared it. But when God shall be pleased to give this evidence to us of His heart being towards us, and of His willingness to be reconciled to us, that He has wrought so strangely for us in sending the second person of the Trinity to be made man, and thus to work out this work of reconciliation—on this we may come certainly to conclude that the heart of God is really in the work.

In Romans 4:16 we have an expression to this purpose: "Therefore it is of faith," says the apostle. It is? What is that? That is the promise of life and peace; for of that the apostle is speaking. It is of faith. Why? "That it might be by grace," so that the end of the promise might be sure. Mark here these two properties of our reconciliation with God. We are reconciled in Christ; upon that, first, it follows that it is a great mystery, second, that it is free. Therefore (says he) it is of faith that it might be free.

"It is of faith." It is as if he should say, "It is from God in Christ," for faith relates always to Christ. It is of faith, that is, of faith in Christ, that it might be by grace. If it had not been by faith, if it were by any works that we could do, then it would not be free; it would not be by grace. But it is by faith in Christ that it might be by grace. And, then, it is of faith in Christ to the end that the promise might be sure.

You will say, "Would it not be sure, though it had not been by faith? Suppose God had only sent an angel (as I hinted before); would it not have been sure?"

No, not so sure as now it is, for since it is by faith in Christ we have Christ to rest upon as the object of our faith for our reconciliation with God; and by that means it comes to be more sure than it could be by any other way. We cannot conceive that

it would be possible for the Lord by any other way to reveal the reality of His heart and the certainty of His work in reconciling the world to Himself as by this means, in that He has revealed it to be in Christ. And that is the third thing that follows from it.

CONSEQUENCE 4. If it is in Christ, then, as it is sure, so it is full. Indeed, were it any other way that God revealed reconciliation to us than in Christ, we might be afraid that there were something in the heart of God against it, that the heart of God did not fully close with us, to be fully reconciled with us. But when we hear what God has done to reconcile us to Himself, what a price He has paid for it, what cost He has been at to accomplish it, and that His own Son has undertaken to bring us and the Father together and so to make up this reconciliation, then we may conclude that it is a full and perfect reconciliation. Jesus Christ would never undertake such a work but He would complete it, and He has completed it; and, therefore, when you hear this word of the gospel, that we are reconciled to God in Christ, you may conclude that the work is a full and a complete work because it is done in Him.

CONSEQUENCE 5. Further, if the reconciliation we have with God is in Christ, then in the fifth place it follows that God is reconciled to man on very honorable terms; it is an honorable reconciliation, for it is such a reconciliation where God suffers nothing at all, but He has all made up. If God had come and only passed by our offenses, and so had been reconciled to us without any more ado, the devils perhaps might have cried out against Him and said, "Where is the glory of Thy justice? These have sinned against Thee as well as we, and the breach they have made on Thy justice is in no way made up. Thou hast been dishonored by them, and that dishonor that Thou hast received by them is in no way answered."

But now, man being reconciled to God in Christ, none of the devils in hell can speak against God's justice or against His righteousness; for as God is reconciled, so He is reconciled on honorable terms. Indeed, when a man offended by an inferior can see no other way to help himself but to put up with all the wrong and injury that has been done him, it is a far different thing from being reconciled to the offending party on honorable terms. For if he could come to have this wrong made up again, and not only have him who has offended come to submit himself to him, but all the injury that he has done him fully satisfied, this would be honorable. So is the reconciliation between God and us: it is so honorable a reconciliation that it will be the glory of God before the angels and saints to all eternity, and it is that which God greatly rejoices in as being exceedingly pleased with it, seeing His honor is made up in this reconciliation.

CONSEQUENCE 6. It follows that if we are reconciled to God in Christ, our reconciliation is in such a way as altogether debases man. Though it is on honorable terms, yet it is in a way where a man has no cause to glory in himself. It is the greatest way to lower and humble man that possibly can be. There could be no way devised where man could be reconciled to God and yet be abased so much as he is in this way of reconciliation, when he truly considers it. For it is true, we are reconciled; but how? We began it not ourselves; we did nothing in it ourselves; all was done by Christ. Therefore, says the apostle, "Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27). God, indeed, has done great things for us, but all that which is done for us is not thankworthy to ourselves; it was all done without us. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; and, therefore, though it is on honorable terms (in respect of God), yet, when we seriously consider it,

we have ground and sufficient cause to be abased in ourselves, even to the very dust.

CONSEQUENCE 7. Yet further, our reconciliation being in Christ, therefore it follows that it is a most firm and lasting reconciliation, indeed an everlasting reconciliation. Its being in Christ is the ground of its everlastingness. Hence nothing can make a breach again between God and us so as we should become enemies again to Him. When we understand this reconciliation with these properties and consequences, then we understand aright what it is to be reconciled to God.

CONSEQUENCE 8. There is one more consequence or property of this reconciliation that I must add to what I mentioned before, and that is this: if it is in Christ that we are reconciled to God, then certainly the work of reconciliation is a very difficult work. It is a mighty hard thing. Heaven and earth must be moved before this can be done, and God even shakes the heavens and the earth in this work. It was the most difficult work that ever God Himself undertook, and the most difficult work the Son undertook; for when He had undertaken it you find that He sweat over it, and before He was done it had cost Him His very heart's blood. Therefore, it was not an ordinary and slight work to reconcile God and man together, but a most difficult work because it was in Christ.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Three Reasons Why God Would Be Reconciled to the World in Christ and in No Other Way

1. Because God the Son is most glorified in this way
2. Because God the Father is most glorified in this way
3. Because there was no such way as this to melt the hearts of sinners, or to encourage them to come to God

*I*t yet remains to show why God would reconcile Himself to the world in this way—in Christ—and in no other way. And for that I shall only give you these three reasons:

REASON 1. First, because in this way the Father glorified His Son. Had it not been for this way of atonement, we would have little understood the glory of the second person in the Trinity; no, nor indeed of the third person, nor the distinction of the persons. And therefore, before the gospel came to be made known

to the sons of men, the distinction of the persons in the Trinity was very little made known. And in those places where the gospel is not revealed and made known, there is nothing fully known of the distinction of the persons of the Trinity. Now for the glory of the Trinity, and more especially for the glory of the second person, the Son of God (who is the special person in the work of reconciliation) God has chosen this way of reconciliation.

It is true indeed, the third person, the Spirit, is sent by Christ, and in the consummation of the work of reconciliation the glory of that person appears, but the main weight of the work lies on the Son. And for the glory of the Son of God has He appointed this way to be reconciled to the world. And indeed, it is such a work as the Son Himself exceedingly glories in, and accounts this to be a great part of His glory, that He is appointed by God the Father to be the mediator to reconcile God and man together. I beseech you to observe this: this work of reconciliation between God and us is that which Christ Himself glories in, and it is that which He counts next to that glory that He has personally with the Father, as He is generated of Him from all eternity. Next to that, Jesus Christ glories in this: that He is appointed to be a mediator between the Father and sinful man.

And that Christ Himself glories in this work, I will give you a Scripture or two to prove it. John 13:31 is remarkable for this: "Therefore when He was gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.'" Glorified when? It was when Judas betrayed Him, and when He was going to shed His blood, to die for the sins of man, and to complete and perfect this work of atonement or reconciliation. "Now is the Son of man glorified." It is as if He had said, "I was indeed designed by the Father from all eternity to undertake this work of reconciliation, and I came into the world for this very end:

that I might do it. And all this while I have been doing it in a way of preparation, but the main work is still ahead, for Me to accomplish and perfect this work of reconciliation. But now it is at hand. Now I am going to die, and My death will bring an end to the work. And now is the Son of man glorified. Yes, here is the glory that I expected from all eternity. This is the glory I rejoiced in when I was in the bosom of the Father; for then I knew of this. I knew I was appointed to be a mediator. I knew it would cost Me My blood when I came to complete that work, and now the time is come when it is to be performed. Therefore now the Son of man is glorified.”

Jesus Christ counts it His glory that He is appointed to stand as a mediator between God and us. And therefore you shall find that when the Scripture speaks of Christ’s being appointed for this work by God it says that He rejoiced in it exceedingly: “Sacrifices and offerings Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt offerings, and sin offerings Thou hast not required. Then said I, ‘Lo, I come’” (Psalm 40:6–7).

What is that which God spoke to him, to which His ear was opened? That which God the Father spoke to Him was this: “Son, as for the work of reconciliation between Myself and sinful man, I have appointed and designed Thee to it. I have appointed Thee to go to be a mediator between us, and to undertake to make satisfaction, and such satisfaction that sinful man and I may be at peace, that mercy and justice may be reconciled together.” For, let me tell you (as I have hinted before), God and we could never have been reconciled unless mercy and justice had been reconciled. Now God the Father tells Jesus Christ that He has appointed Him to this work. And, says Christ, “Mine ears hast Thou opened. Oh, I entertain this work gladly; yes, even though I know that I must be made a sacrifice for the sin of man.”

And observe what follows in verse 7: "Then said I, 'Lo, I come. I am ready, and willing to do this work, for in the volume of the book it is written, that I should do Thy will.'" That is, in the Scriptures it was written before ever Christ came into the world that He should come to perfect this great work. And verse 8: "I delight to do Thy will, O Lord; yea, Thy law is in My heart." What was this will of God? Certainly the will of God here spoken of was that Christ should be a mediator between God and man, and to make up this reconciliation. And "Oh," says He, "I do even delight to do this will of Thine, though it be a will which will cost Me dearly." And, says He, "Thy law, this law that requires Me to come to be a sacrifice, and to shed My blood to the end that I may be a mediator between man and God, even this law is within My heart." This is one reason why God chose this way of reconciling Himself to the world, because it tended to the glorifying of His Son, and His Son acknowledges that it was His glory. And therefore, just when He was going to die, He broke out into these words: "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover" (Luke 22:15), because that was to make way for His death, which was the accomplishment of this work of reconciliation.

REASON 2. A second reason why God would have this way of reconciling man to Himself is because in this way the Father Himself is most glorified. The attributes of God shine in a greater luster in this way of reconciliation than if God had been reconciled to man only in passing by the offense. For now shines forth the glory of His wisdom, His power, and His justice as well as His mercy. Not only mercy, but the other divine attributes of God shine in this way of reconciliation exceedingly bright. And there is no such glass to behold the glory of God in as the glory of the gospel in the mystery of reconciliation. We indeed behold and see the glory of God in the glass of the creatures;

but in the gospel, in the work of reconciliation in Christ, there is the bright glass where all the beams of the glory of God's attributes are united together and shine with a transcendent luster. Yes, there is not only a luster and a shining forth of them, but a warmth that is reflected in the beholding of them.

In this way of reconciliation God Himself is glorified; and, therefore, in that text which I named, John 13:31, you have this likewise said. As Christ acknowledged Himself to be glorified by this work, so says He, "My Father is glorified in Me." Therefore in John 17:1: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee." And verse 4: "I have glorified Thee on earth." How has He glorified God? "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do." In other words, "That work of mediation, that work of reconciliation between Thyself and sinful man, that work have I finished, and in that work I have glorified Thee on earth." And the truth is, this is the glory that God expects from the children of men, even to be admired and magnified in this great work of reconciling the world to Himself in His Son.

REASON 3. A third reason is this: because the Lord saw that there was no such way to melt the heart of sinful creatures and draw them to come and close with Himself as this way. There is no such way to encourage the hearts of poor sinners to come in to be reconciled to God as this: even the consideration of the great things that the Lord has done to make peace and reconciliation between Himself and sinners. God (I say) foresaw this, and because He would have a way to break the hardest heart in the world, and to draw the most stout and stubborn sinner to Himself, therefore He has chosen this way above others of reconciliation.

The gospel tells us that parable where the vineyard is let out to husbandmen; and it says that when the master sent one

servant and they beat him, and he sent another and they beat him, at length he said to himself, "I will send my son; surely they will reverence him." It is as if he had said, "Here is a company of hard-hearted, stubborn, stout, and wicked creatures in this world, and they have had this and the other argument to work on their hearts to persuade them to come to me. But so hard are their hearts that they reject all the arguments that they have. And nothing strikes into their hard hearts; nothing melts them; nothing persuades them to come to me. But I have one argument more, and that shall break the stoutest and hardest heart there is; and that argument shall be a prevailing argument if they are those who are appointed to life, if they are such as are not lost creatures forever."

And what is that argument? Even this: "I am reconciling Myself to the world in My Son. I will send My Son into the world to work out this reconciliation; and there I will reveal so much of My glory that when they come to see this, their hearts shall be filled with admiration. They shall stand and wonder at the goodness and riches of My grace. And their hearts shall melt before Me, and shall at length be gained to Me."

When they come to hear of this reconciliation, certainly it is the most dangerous thing in the world for the hearts of men not to be melted, not to be gained on with this doctrine of our reconciliation with God in Christ. And remember it: if your hearts, when you come to hear of this doctrine, are not gained upon, are not drawn to God, it is a shrewd argument that you are lost creatures; for God Himself looks upon this way of reconciliation as the most gaining and prevailing argument that possibly He can use to gain the heart of any man. And unless you find your hearts gained upon by this, you may take it as an argument that you are in a most dangerous condition.

I dare appeal to those whose hearts God has gained to Himself. What was it that gained their hearts? What was it that broke their hearts most kindly at first and caused them to fly to God? Was it not the opening of this mystery of reconciliation in Christ? Was it not God's tender of His mercy to the souls of poor, sinful creatures in Christ? And woe to those persons who shall sit under the ministry of the gospel, the droppings of heaven, and hear the blessed tidings of reconciliation in Christ, and yet not find their hearts gained by this argument! For this was one special end why God chose this way of reconciling Himself to the world, that He might by this gain the hearts of the children of men to Himself forever.

So now you have had all these things opened besides the proof of it in Scripture. First, you have had it shown to you that there could be no reconciliation but in Christ. Second, that Christ was a fit mediator to reconcile God and us together, and in what particulars. Third, what Christ has undertaken to do to reconcile us to God, and what He does to this very day. Fourth, how we come to have interest in what He has done for our reconciliation. Fifth, the several properties or consequences of this reconciliation, which reveals to us what a kind of reconciliation it is. And then the reasons why God would reconcile the world to Himself in this way rather than in any other way.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Use 1: Humiliation for Sin Is Useful

*T*he application of all this to ourselves follows. Indeed, a great part of what has been insisted on, though it has been by way of explication, yet has been applicatory. But there are further things by way of application to be presented to you, all flowing naturally from what has been taught. Neither do I need to be long in it because it is but only working on your hearts the same things which I have enlarged on in the explication.

From the truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, hence is presented before us the woeful misery that sin has brought us into. There is nothing that sets out the breach between God and man so much as that the making up of that breach must be in Christ.

There is a great question now whether humiliation is necessary or not, whether men must be made sensible of their natural condition, and so be humbled, and in that way be brought to Jesus Christ. There are a great many who catch hold of the abuse of this humiliation so as wholly to exclude it (but exceedingly ignorantly), because some would make

humiliation as if it were a condition of the covenant, which indeed it is not. And when they hear us say, "That is not a condition," they presently conclude that there is no need at all of it. They say, "Humiliation does not at all interest us in Jesus Christ." And because some, perhaps, will trust too much in their humiliation and rely on it, therefore others will wholly take it away and exclude it.

But though humiliation is not the condition of the covenant, though it is not that which gives us an interest in Jesus Christ, though it is not that which we are to rely on, yet there is very much a need of humiliation, and that we be made sensible of our lost condition by sin. By that which has been delivered you may see a necessity of it. For if you believe that God will pardon your sins, and that He will be reconciled to you, you must believe it is in Christ.

"Yes," you will say, "that is certain, and therefore, seeing Christ has wrought our reconciliation, what need is there for us to be humbled for sin?"

Certainly, my brethren, in that which you say, if you understand what you say, there is implied the deepest work of humiliation, and the strongest argument that it is possible for any creature to be capable of in this world.

"How is that?" you will say. "I believe that God is reconciled to me in Christ. What? Has God wrought my reconciliation in His Son? Has He brought it about by Jesus Christ, and chosen that way above all other ways to do it? Then certainly such is the breach between God and me through my sin that all the angels in heaven, and all the men in the world, could never make it up. Such was the breach that my sin had made between God and my soul as it required so great a mystery of godliness to make it up as the very angels themselves are not able to comprehend."

And indeed, it is the greatest work that ever God did, or that

ever God will do to all eternity. Consider what it cost to make up the breach that sin had made between God and your soul.

Again, if you believe that you are reconciled to God in Christ, you not only see and are convicted of the greatness of that breach, but you must be sensible of it too. For can I go out of myself, and exercise such a glorious act of faith on Christ as mediator, and yet not be sensible of what Christ has done? Certainly the work of faith can never be raised in the heart, but it is raised so as the sinner knows what he does when he believes and is sensible of what he does.

And if this is so, consider these two things: When a man believes in Christ as mediator, he knows what he does when he believes and is sensible of what he does. Take but these two things for granted, and I will warrant that soul will be humbled. It follows of itself and of its own nature. It need not be required as a condition. It is as necessary to the work of faith as light in the sun when it shines or as heat to the fire, and indeed it is implied. For example, when I am to go to such a place, or about such a business, it is true, going is not the condition required; it is not required that I should travel so many steps by way of condition, but that such an act should be performed; that I should be at such a place at such a day to do such a business. Now, though this is not expressed in a condition, that I must go so many miles, and that the going of the miles is as necessary as the other—though that is not required, yet it is implied in the act that is required. And it is to be looked on as necessary, as that which is required as a condition.

So, it is true, humiliation is not the condition of the second covenant; it is not the thing that interests us in Jesus Christ, but it is that which the nature of faith necessarily implies, for faith is an understanding grace. And indeed, it is the most glorious work of the soul that ever was. For a soul to believe in

God through Christ, to believe that God is reconciled to Him in Christ, is the most glorious work under heaven.

Now when I believe in Christ as Savior, what is He a Savior from? He is a Savior from my sin, a Savior from the wrath of God, and this the soul must necessarily be sensible of. How else can it put forth such an act of faith? I know no faithful preacher in the world who ever pressed humiliation further than this: that when men believe in Christ they must know and be sensible of what they do. You must know Christ as a mediator, and, if He is a mediator, what is He a mediator for? Why, to make up a breach between God and you.

And then you must know what that breach is, that is, the breach that your sin has made. And then you must know what sin that is, namely, that your sin has provoked the justice of God and put you under the curse of the law. So you see the necessity of opening the law: though it is not a thing which interests us in Christ, yet it follows of itself as a necessary consequence without which you cannot understand Christ as a reconciler.

This is therefore the first use. If God will never be reconciled to any soul but only in Christ, then that soul which comes to be saved must come to see itself as in a most woeful condition. For such a creature as has need of a mediator must be in a most wretched, damnable, miserable, cursed condition in itself, or else it could never require such a mediator. Certainly, there is no such way to honor Christ as this.

When men speak of Christ and free grace, unless they instruct people in this, namely the breach that is made between God and them through sin, how can any of their audience understand what Christ is? Christ is a mediator. To do what? To save from sin, What? From sin? Yes, from sin. What is that? Sin must be made known if Christ is the reconciler between God and us, because reconciliation implies a breach, and a breach

that is made by sin, and if you know not what breach it is that is made, how can you honor Christ as the mediator?

So you must know what that breach is: that breach is the enmity that is in your hearts by nature. You must know what that enmity is and be sensible of it, or else you can never give glory to God in Christ. And though many have so much in their mouths of Christ and of free grace, yet it is apparent in the course of their lives that they do not give glory to Christ. Christ has little cause to thank them for any glory that He has from them in their conversation. They rather blot and stain the name of Christ. And what is the reason? The truth is, they never rightly understood Christ as the mediator. They never knew what it was to have need of a mediator between God and them, and so they have but a superficial knowledge of Christ, and Christ has but a superficial glory from them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Use 2: Discovering Mistakes about Reconciliation

*I*f God has reconciled Himself to the world in Christ, hence we are to take notice of the great mistakes there are in the world in the point of reconciliation with God. Certainly, if it is true that the only way of making up our peace with God is in Christ, then the world generally errs in the great matter of reconciliation with God. And a mistake in this is an undoing mistake, a damning mistake. A soul may perish eternally merely through a mistake in the matter of reconciliation.

A man may be troubled for sin, and cry out about his sin, and may break off the practice of his sin and cry to God in prayer that He would pardon him and be reconciled to Him, and yet if he mistakes here and does not understand that it must be God, in and through Christ, who reconciles him, this may prove an undoing mistake to that soul. And although people may be crying out about their sins all their days, they may perish at last if they do not know and rightly understand how to close with God's mercy as it is in Christ, if they do not understand that it is God in Christ who reconciles Himself to the world.

We know the greatest part of people look for their reconciliation with God merely in a natural way. They have sinned against Him, and they will cry to Him for mercy and for pardon; and so they think all may be made up between God and them. I remember Luther had a notable speech concerning this in his meditation about the way which God has appointed for reconciling man to Himself, that it is in Christ. It is intolerable and horrible blasphemy (said he) for any to feign any work by which they shall presume to pacify God when they shall see and hear that God cannot be pacified in any other way but by the blood of His Son, one drop whereof is more precious than the whole creation. And on this ground, meditating on God's reconciling the world to Himself, and that it was by such a way as the blood of His Son, and that one drop of His blood is of more value than all the creatures in heaven and earth, hence it was that he affirmed it to be horrible and intolerable blasphemy for any man to think to pacify God in any other way.

No, when God by such a way has appointed reconciliation, for a man to neglect this and think that any work of his own shall pacify God—especially when those who hear the gospel preached to them shall think of any other way of their own and so neglect the way that God has appointed—this is indeed a most intolerable and horrible blasphemy. And certainly it provokes the Lord exceedingly that a sinner shall be made apprehensive and sensible of the breach that is made between God and him, and yet to think the breach to be no greater than may be made up with any work of repentance or good meaning or good works. The Lord disdains to look on that sinner in his folly, that a man should think that the breach between God and him is a matter of no greater moment.

No, my brethren, you must know that the breach between God and you by sin is a matter of greater consequence than can

be made up by prayers or fears or anything else that you can do. All this is untempered mortar. It is true, when there is repentance and turning to God, it is a good sign that God is at work with your hearts; but that cannot do the deed. It is in Christ; it is the blood of the Son of God that must make satisfaction for sin; it is that which must make the reconciliation. This is indeed the great doctrine of the gospel, and until you receive this into your understanding, into your hearts, all other things that we preach are to no purpose at all. It will never do you good until you have embraced this. You will never sanctify God's name, nor glorify God in your conversation, nor have any true peace within your doors, until you come to receive this point into your hearts, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Take heed, therefore, of any mistakes in this point.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Use 3: Encouragement for Sinners to Come to God for Reconciliation, and Discouragements Removed

*T*he third use is encouragement to sinners to come for reconciliation with God. You may remember that one reason why God did on purpose appoint this way to reconcile Himself to the world was that He might break the hearts of sinners, and that it might be an encouragement to sinners to come in. Is this God's end? Oh, then, that God might have this end in your souls! This has been our endeavor, to open what we could of this doctrine of the gospel, namely, of God's reconciling Himself in Christ. And we have not done this only from this text, but from others as well. And though divers other things have been spoken, yet you cannot but know that the drift of all has been to this purpose: that God may have this glory of gaining our hearts to Himself, and that it might be an encouragement to you to come in to be reconciled to God.

Are there any who are apprehensive of the breach that sin has made between God and their souls? I suppose there are many. You complain of the hardness of your hearts, and that you cannot be sensible of sin as you desire. It is a sign that there is some sensibleness therefore of the breach between God and you. Now the Lord, in opening this doctrine, propounds the way of reconciliation; and He would fain draw your hearts to come in and to be reconciled to Him. What is it that hinders? These two things are the only hindrances:

The first hindrance is the great distance between God and the creature. I am a poor, vile worm, and the Lord is an infinite, glorious, dreadful God. Oh, that I might take off this dreadfulness from you, that it might not scare and hinder you! Therefore God propounds Himself to you in His Son. If God should indeed speak from heaven by thunder and lightning, and call in sinners to come in and humble themselves and seek to make their peace with Him, it might scare them, and on the sight of the distance between God and them they might not dare to come in. But, says God, "I call you now in My Son. It is My Son, who came to be like one of you, and to be made sensible of your infirmities, in whom I offer you reconciliation." This takes away the dreadfulness of God from sinners, and therefore is a mighty encouragement.

And though there is such a distance between God and us, yet there is a Christ between God the Father and us. Though we are the poorest worms in the world, though we are mean and vile creatures, yet if we were ten thousand times meaner than we are, seeing there is such a mediator between God and us, this makes up the distance. Christ is such a mediator that there is enough in Him to make up all the distance that can be between God and man.

A second hindrance or discouragement is sin. Either the

greatest of our sins, or the multitude of our sins, or our long continuance in sin hinders us from coming. “Oh,” says the soul, “I have been so vile a sinner, and I have continued so long, and I have multiplied sin one after another, and is it possible for such a one as I am to be reconciled?”

It is true, had you to deal only with God as He is in Himself, you might despair. But know, O sinner, that it is God reconciling Himself in Christ. Therefore, though you are a great sinner, and a sinner of long continuance, yet there is a reconciliation with God in His Son. Seeing that Christ has undertaken such a work as to make up a peace between God and sinners, and to mediate for them, you may be encouraged to come in and to lay hold on this grace of God in Christ.

If you say you are unworthy, and that there is no worthiness in you for God to regard you for, your objections are still answered with this: it is God who is reconciling the world to Himself in Christ. Indeed, if there were no one but God and you to deal together, and if you were to deal only with God Himself, you might be afraid. But you have to deal with God not in Himself, but in His Son, for so He has set forth Himself to the world. He is reconciled to the world in His Son, and therefore that may encourage you, notwithstanding all your unworthiness.

And what further is there to discourage you? “Oh,” you will say, “God is infinitely just to punish sin!”

Still this point will be sufficient to remove all discouragements: He is reconciling the world to Himself. Though He is holy, His holiness is pleased in Christ. Though He is just, His justice is satisfied in Christ. So there is enough in this point to take away all objections, to remove all discouragements that any sinner in the world has. And therefore, as God propounds this on purpose to draw sinners to Himself that they may be reconciled to Him, so let them know that the more grace here is received

for the taking away of all objections and discouragements, the more will sinners be left without excuse another day if they do not come in and lay hold on this grace of God in Christ.

God will have His glory in one way if He cannot have it in the other. God primarily intends His glory in reconciling the world to Himself; and therefore He takes away all discouragements from sinners that they may come in and venture their souls on His rich grace and mercy in Christ. But if God cannot have His glory from that point, then the more this is preached in any congregation, the more will God have His glory by stopping men's mouths. They will not be able to say on another day, "Oh, the Lord was terrible. He was a hard master, and I did not dare go to Him. Indeed, my conscience told me I had sinned against Him, but I dared not go to Him for mercy, for I was afraid of Him."

The mouths of men shall be stopped another day who have heard this doctrine of God reconciling the world in Christ opened to them, and have not come in and laid hold of it. Indeed, it is the plea of many a servant who has offended his master, when one comes to him and asks, "Why do you not go and humble yourself before your master?" "Oh," says he, "I dare not; he is such a furious man that he will fly upon me presently. I would rather suffer much than go to him." This they think is excuse enough, and many poor servants will rather wander up and down the country and perish than go back to their master. But no sinner can say so of God, let him be never so vile a sinner who is departing from God. Suppose that one should come to him and say, "You wretched sinner, where are you going? You are departing from God. You are going away from Him, but behold, God calls you to come in. Oh, go, and humble your soul and lament your sin, and lay down all those weapons of enmity against God which you have taken up." This sinner now

cannot say, "How shall I dare to look on God, I who have been such a vile, wretched sinner? Surely God will destroy and consume me."

No, the Lord propounds Himself to you, a God of mercy in His Son, and tells you that He has provided a means in His Son to be reconciled to you. His heart has been so much on reconciling Himself to the children of men that He has sent His Son to do this work. And though it cost the very blood of His Son, yet He will do it. Therefore, sinner, if you do not come in, but go on wandering from God and continuing in ways of enmity against Him, may your blood be upon your own head. You have read this blessed doctrine of the gospel opened, that God was reconciling Himself to the world, that He was reconciling Himself to the world in His Son, that God expected that when this message was brought to a congregation the whole congregation should come and fly to Him, and that the world should be filled with cries. Oh, that we might be reconciled to Him!

Our Lord expects this day that some of you should reflect on this yourselves by crying to Him for reconciliation in His Son. That should be the issue of such sermons as these are. God always, after such preaching, looks to hear some soul repeat in prayer to God, and tell Him what it has heard in the ministry of the Word, and on that basis make a prayer to Him according to what it has heard. The Lord expects that this day some sinner or other should get alone and cry to God in prayer: "Lord, I have heard not only that there is a possibility for sinners to be reconciled, but there is such a glorious way of reconciliation that Thou hast provided in Thy Son—such an honorable way, such a certain way of reconciliation—and that Thy heart is much in that way. And, Lord, I have heard that this is a way that takes away all objections in the world, all the discouragements that can be imagined; and Thou hast revealed it to the end

that Thou might break the hearts of sinners, and draw them to come in and accept that blessed covenant that Thou hast tendered to them in Christ, and be reconciled to Thee. Now, Lord, I desire to cast my soul on this free grace of Thine in Thy Son. Oh, that I might feel Thy Spirit enabling me to do such a glorious work as this!”

Oh, that the Lord might hear such things as these from some of your closets this day! It will be that which will cause the heart of God to rejoice that ever He opened the doctrine of reconciliation to you. Otherwise it will turn to the quite contrary end: it will only serve to stop your mouths at the great day.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Use 4: Do Not Despair of God's Making Peace in This Nation

*I*f there is such a way of reconciliation between God and us, if God has wrought it so that it is in Christ, truly from hence we have no cause to despair in God's power, wisdom, and goodness to make peace in this nation. God has done the greater work. You see that God is a God of peace and loves peace; and to the end that He might be at peace with the wretched children of men He has wrought so wonderfully as to send His own Son into the world and provided such a way that He may be sure that peace may be made, and by that way He has done it. He has made peace between mercy and justice; there is a peace made between an infinitely provoked God and wretched, sinful, vile creatures.

I told you before that this was a mighty difficult work; yes, the most difficult that ever was, or can be in the world. If God has therefore wrought such a work, so difficult, in a way so glorious, then from hence learn not to despair. God may work peace for us in this nation, and an honorable and good peace too. We are

not only hereby encouraged to cry to God for peace between Him and our souls, but we are by this encouraged to cry to Him for peace in the nation, that He would put an end to these woe-ful times of destruction, misery, and war which many of our brethren have suffered and bled under. And indeed, those who understand or have ever felt the work of God in bringing peace between His majesty and their souls are those who have such interest in God that if any people shall prevail with Him for peace in the land, it must be these. They will prove to be our peacemakers in the end, howsoever people at present cry out regarding them, as if they were the means and instruments of making the greatest debate, and as if they were the enemies of peace. No, my brethren, they who have experience of this great work of God of making peace between Himself and their souls are those who lie at the throne of grace, continually crying to Him who is the Prince of peace to make peace in the land.

We desire peace. But you will say, "How can it be done that way?" Why should we wonder how, when God Himself has made peace between heaven and earth! We see things so intricate that we know not how it should be done, and we wonder how it should ever be brought about that the spirits of men, being now so set one against another, should be reconciled. But God has ways in His infinite wisdom that we are not able to comprehend.

The spirits of any of our adversaries are not so desperately bent against us; by comparison, there was as much enmity between us and God as there can be between us and any of our adversaries in the world. And we have no enemies so exasperated against us as we were by nature against God. If, therefore, God could find a way, when we were such enemies to Him, to make peace between us and Him, then has God likewise a way to make a true, settled, and constant peace between our

adversaries and us. And we should desire that as God has made our peace with Him firm and sure, so the peace God makes in this land may be something like the peace that He has made between heaven and earth.

There is a firm peace made between God and us, a peace that we may rest on and confide in. A peace between our adversaries and us (as things now stand) we cannot count as sure. You cannot be sure of your lives one night after it is done, as things now stand, but we must desire that such a peace might be made as there is between God and us—sure and firm and stable. Therefore, pray as much and believe as much as you are able; and though things are brought to such a strait as there is no likelihood in the thoughts of men how it should be done, yet they are not brought to such a strait as things were between God and us before He reconciled Himself to us. And there was more required to make up that reconciliation between God and us than there can be between us and our adversaries. And what was it that made our peace first with God? God was in Christ reconciling the world; it was the blood of His Son that saved our blood. Therefore, let all those who are godly go to this God of peace, and not only cry to Him by prayer for the making of a true and firm peace among us, but present to Him the blood of His Son to that end and say, “O Lord, Thou who sent Thy Son into the world to make peace between our souls and Thee, look on that blood, and let that blood prevail with Thee to make peace in England, that there may be no more of the precious blood of Thy saints spilled and shed among us.”

Here is the way to get peace. And, certainly, if the blood of Christ were able to make such a peace between us and God as is firm and lasting, it will be able also to make peace in this poor nation—and such a peace as shall be firm and lasting too.

Thus we are encouraged with regard to external condition, with regard to the peace of our land, that, seeing God has done the greater work, He is able much more to do the lesser. Seeing that God has reconciled mercy and justice together, and made peace between heaven and earth, and that, when the breach was so great that all the men in the world and all the angels in heaven could not find out a way to compose the difference and make up that breach, yet He has done it, He can certainly also compose the differences and make up the breach that is among us.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Use 5: Those Who Have Assurance of Their Peace with God Ought to Highly Prize It

*H*ence then, if our reconciliation with God is such as has been opened, and if it is wrought in that way, then another use we may make of it is this: all those who have any comfortable assurance that their peace is made with God are to prize it highly, and not easily and lightly so as to lose the assurance of it. Why? Because it has cost so much as it has, and it has been wrought for them after such a strange manner as it has. It is the greatest work that ever God made, and that wherein His wisdom, goodness, and power have been seen.

Now this is that which God has set Himself to work so powerfully, to the end that He might accomplish it, and it is that which has cost so dearly as it has; it is that wherein so much of the mystery of godliness is contained. Surely, then, if we have obtained the assurance of it in ourselves, we should highly prize it and seek to preserve it, and not lose it.

When we examined the excellency of our reconciliation

with God and what admirable fruits flowed from it, we presented a similar use: because it is so excellent we should preserve it and not let it go lightly. But now this use is drawn from the way of reconciliation, that it is a reconciliation in Christ. And indeed the argument falls more strongly on us here than it did formerly. Before, the argument was that we should prize it because we have such comfort in our reconciliation, because such admirable fruits flow from it, because it is able to carry us through all troubles in the world. But now we must seek to preserve it because we have it in Christ, because it cost more than ten thousand worlds are worth, because God has wrought so wonderfully to bring it about.

Has God therefore spoken peace to any of your souls? Take heed that you turn not again to folly. "I will hear what the Lord will say, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not return again to folly" (Psalm 85:8).

Have you gotten any comfortable persuasion that the Lord is reconciled to you in Christ, and that God has brought you to know that reconciliation with Him was a difficult work? It may be that it cost you many tears and prayers, and much trouble, before you could get it. You sought it for a long time in a legal way, and cried to God for His mercy to pardon your sins. You were seeking Him in that natural way; but then you could not have peace spoken to your hearts. But in time the Lord opened the mystery of Christ to your souls, and then you sought reconciliation with Him in Christ, and saw that it was in His blood that your peace was made.

Have you gotten peace in an evangelical way through Christ? Oh, make much of it. It is a precious jewel in that it comes to you in such a way as this. It cost God dearly, and it may cost you dearly; but whether it costs you dearly or not, you may be sure it cost God dearly. Therefore make much of it and do not lose

it. To lose it fully so that God should again become your enemy, that you cannot do; but you may lose it in your apprehension; you may lose the comfortable assurance of it.

There are two ways in which Christians may lose the comfortable assurance of their peace with God: first, through the weakness of their faith, and, second, through the sinfulness of their lives.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

*Christians May Lose the
Assurance of Their Peace with
God through the Weakness
of Their Faith*

*C*hristians may lose the assurance of their peace through the weakness of their faith, and that in two ways.

The first way is when, through their weakness, they think that the sin they fall into, or are overtaken with, presently causes an enmity between God and them. I have no doubt that there are many souls to whom God is reconciled, and sometimes who have had some comfort in the assurance of this reconciliation, yet if at any time they are but overcome with the sinful distempers of their hearts, they presently think that this puts an enmity between God and them again. They begin to look on God as on their enemy, and think that all the peace is broken between God and them. This makes such a breach between God and them that they think that all God has done is undone again, and that God is against them in all

His ways and contrary to them as to an enemy.

It is true that carnal hearts who do not understand what the difficulty is of making peace with God, or what a breach it is that sin makes between God and the soul, can sin and sin and sin, and yet think God will be merciful to them still, never looking on their sin as enmity to God, or on God as an enemy to them in regard of their sin. But take a poor soul who understands what sin is, and has found it a hard thing to make peace between God and Himself, and as soon as any sin overcomes such a soul those daily weaknesses, many times, make him think that God is an enemy to him. And however good the hopes were that he had before, yet he feels the breach is again as wide, if not wider, between God and him as ever it was.

By this know that you greatly dishonor the great work of God in Christ in reconciliation. Surely it is as great a dishonor as you can cast on Christ, when He has come to make reconciliation between God and you, when He has undertaken and done it so thoroughly as He has, and when it cost Him His very life to do it. Yet when you apprehend this reconciliation to be no otherwise but that on any offense you think all is undone again, truly this would be but a very poor reconciliation.

Suppose that two people are at odds one with another, and that a great breach has been made between them. Then another person comes and reconciles these two for the present, but yet so unstably that the one still watches to take an advantage against the other, so that if the least offense is committed they shall be as great enemies one to another as before. This would be but a poor reconciliation.

So when you come to think that on every sin you commit, after you have had your peace made between God and you—though you can appeal to God in the sincerity of your heart that it is the greatest burden in the world to you that you do

this sin against Him, and you would think it the greatest mercy in the world to be delivered from that body of sin—when you yet come to think that, due to this sin you have committed, the breach is made as wide as ever it was with God, what a dishonor you put on Christ!

What a reconciliation has Christ made for you! Oh, therefore believe that Christ has made another manner of peace with God than so; and know that it is not a peace that can so soon be broken.

If a bone-setter set a bone in your body that was broken or out of joint, and set it so that it is right for the present, but yet so too that if you move your arm or leg it is out of joint again, you would conclude that this is no skillful bone-setter. Christ came from heaven for this very end and purpose: that He might join God and us together, that He might make us one with God. Do you think that Christ has only set us together in such a way that on every daily infirmity we should be out with God again? No, certainly He has set us strongly together, more strongly than ever we were. Adam, in innocence, when he was without sin, had not such a strong peace with God as you have in the midst of your sins. It is a truth, and though we cannot speak of such things without trembling (we know how ready carnal hearts are to abuse them), yet this is a truth, and so I would have Christians look on it, and look on the reconciliation that is made between God and them as a peace firmer than ever it was with Adam and God. This is true even though Adam had no sin and they have many sins, for Adam had it not in Christ; and therefore think on it as such a reconciliation as Christ has wrought, and so honor and sanctify God in it.

If indeed it were no other reconciliation than you have by your own prayers or your own tears, then you might fear that

that reconciliation might be broken on your renewing of sin. And the truth is, this is the ground why those who have enlightened consciences are so full of fears and doubts. Those indeed who have no enlightenings in them are without any fear, but the others are full of doubts and fears; and it is on this ground: because the peace they have is no other than what they have gotten by their prayers, by their duties, by their tears, and by their good meanings, as they think, and they never bring in Christ! They never have been acquainted with that great mystery of godliness.

Now, that peace with God that you have gotten in any other way than by God's revealing the work of His reconciling Himself to the world in Christ will never hold for long, but you will be ready on every temptation, on every suggestion, on every new sin committed to call that peace into question. But if you have been rooted in Christ, and your peace is grounded on that which is beyond all your duties, all your tears and prayers, and can look on God as reconciled to you in Christ, this peace will hold. And it may hold notwithstanding the abundance of sins that may remain in the soul of one who is thus reconciled to God.

And therefore, for your help, so that you may not on every sin call into question your reconciliation with God, know that, being reconciled to God, you are not under the law such that every sin against the law should put you under the sentence of eternal death. You are not under the curse that threatens everlasting death to those who so sin.

Here is the difference between one who is reconciled to God and one who is not. One who is not reconciled to God in Christ is so under the law that every sin he commits, be it little or great, puts him under the sentence and curse of eternal death. The neglect of any duty, be it never so small, does

it. But here is the privilege of being a believer: when you are a believer, and so are in Jesus Christ, then the sins you commit should indeed be for your humiliation, but none of them put you under the sentence of eternal death.

Neither on this ground are you to keep the law, that is, to keep it so as to think that, if you do not, every breach of the law would put you under the sentence of eternal death. Indeed, others who are under the law must look to keep the law whether they are able or not; but the law has no power over you in that way, and you are not, on that basis, to keep it. Therefore, the sins which you commit do not put you under the sentence of eternal death as the sins of others do. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ" (Romans 8:1). This is true of every moment and instant of time: there is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ.

I will give you another Scripture for this that is just as clear as the other, though not perhaps so often noticed. The apostle writes: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Romans 7:5). Note, "the motions of sin which by the law worked in our members." What did they do? They brought forth fruit, and fruit to death. This the blessed apostle said was when we were in the flesh. But now that we are believers, though motions of sin remain, yet they are not such as bring forth fruit to death. None of the sins of believers bring forth fruit to death, for they are delivered from that power of the law. The law cannot bring the sentence of death on them. This is a high privilege of believers, and the right knowledge of this would help us not to think that our peace with God is so broken that God is our enemy through every sin which through human frailty is committed.

OBJECTION. You will say, “What need, then, is there for believers to be careful to avoid sin? May they not take liberty to walk as they wish?”

ANSWER. Oh, no! There are other arguments besides this. Indeed, had they a slavish spirit, had they no other arguments to persuade them from sin but this one (that sin would make God and them enemies), it would be something. Men may object and say that believers may do what they wish because their peace with God cannot be broken. But the truth is that they themselves have slavish hearts and do not know the strength of other arguments to keep them from sin.

I dare to boldly affirm this: a believer should not think, upon committing sin, that therefore he is now under the sentence of death, if it is such a sin as may stand with the state of grace, as many weaknesses and frailties may. For there are some sins, such as living after the flesh, which the Scripture speaks of, which if believers live in they shall die. You will say, “What, can they perish eternally?” Well, this is presented as a means to keep them from living after the flesh. But if they should come to live after the flesh, which God’s grace will keep them from doing in a constant way, they shall die. And that they may apprehend eternal death would be due to them, if it were possible for them to fall into that condition so as to live after the flesh.

But it is not true that a believer, on every sin he commits, should be under the sentence of death; for being believers we are freed from the law. And therefore the apostle, after he had spoken of the law of God to the same purpose in Romans 5, answers this objection: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein” (Romans 6:1–2). Immediately before this he says: “Even as sin hath reigned unto

death, so grace must rein through righteousness to eternal life” (Romans 5:21). The grace of God reigns, domineers over all things that come to oppose it—even over all our infirmities, over all our sins, over whatsoever may seem to contradict it, but this is through righteousness.

You have sin in you that would oppose God’s reconciling grace, but grace reigns notwithstanding that sin of yours, and it reigns to eternal life. It has a reigning power to carry you through all difficulties and hindrances to eternal life, and all through the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, believers, that they may keep their peace with God, are to look on all duties required in the law as if they are bound to do them; they are not freed from the duties the law requires. Their being redeemed by God does not take away their relationship to God as a Creator. They are still bound to God as a Creator as well as a Redeemer. But they should look on the law as coming to them in the hand of Christ.

Luther had an excellent comment on this: “Oh, how sweet are the commandments of God to us when we receive them not as they are in the book, but as they are in the wounds of Christ!” When we read the commandments of God in the wounds of Christ, and receive them there, oh, how sweet are they then! Then we obey them out of sweet principles, not out of legal respects, as if on every breach we should be brought under the sentence of eternal death as we were before. This I take to be the meaning of Romans 8:15: “For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.” What is the spirit of bondage? The spirit of bondage, that causes fear at first before one is a believer, is this: “Either perfectly obey the law or perish,” says the spirit, even the Spirit of God, “whether able or not. You must obey everything or die; and if you have sinned against the law you are now accursed, notwithstanding all the duties that you have done.”

The Spirit of God says so to all unbelievers and this causes fear. But, says the apostle, “You have not received the spirit of bondage to fear again,” though perhaps you may fear, due to your weakness, that God will become your enemy on every breach. But the Spirit of God says, “It is not true that you are therefore accursed, but that spirit enables you to go to God as a Father to heal your weakness and give you power against them.” And the contrary is such a mistake as indeed is a great dishonor to the work of God, the reconciliation of God in Christ.

We must put much more stock in that great work which God puts so much on, and, if we did, we might go up and down in the world with a world of comfort, and it would increase sanctification. Indeed, to deny all kind of obligation to the law of God, and to say that men are not bound to keep it since God their Creator is also Redeemer, has an extreme vanity in it. But to give the law its due and the believer his due too—to show how far we are bound to the law, and how far we are delivered from it—is a great mystery of the gospel. People should labor to understand it aright and take heed, lest out of a desire to apprehend the grace of God in Christ we go too far in overthrowing our obligations to God by the law.

One would think that what I have said (if men’s spirits were not so wanton) would be enough, namely that we are not under the sentence of condemnation, though we are not freed from the law and the duties of it since God is our Creator. And we should think the grace of God magnified in this, and therefore thus far take hold and make use of this grace of God in Christ so as not to lose the comfort of it. This is the first weakness that hinders men from preserving the comfortable assurance of their peace with God.

The second weakness is that godly men are ready to judge God’s works through their weakness as works of enmity

against them. Not only do they see their ways towards God as an argument that God and they are at enmity, but they are ready to judge all the administrations of God's providence as if they were the works of an enemy to them—as if God were, in these works, walking contrary to them. This is a great weakness and dishonor to God. Let the wicked and ungodly judge so if they will. As God says in Isaiah 27:4, "Fury is not in Me; who will set the briars and the thorns before Me?" He will go through them.

When God comes in outward ways of misery, ungodly ones may interpret them as God walking contrary to them. They may look on all His works as the works of an enemy, and of one who intends their ruin and destruction. They look on every trouble, if it is but the least distemper of their body, as the beginnings of eternal wrath, and a making way for eternal misery, for all they know. But as for those who are reconciled to God, it is their weakness if they should look on the greatest affliction they meet with as a work of God's coming towards them as an enemy.

No, you must know that there is this power in your reconciliation with God in Christ:

First, nothing that God ever does towards you tends to everlasting wrath—nothing whatsoever. Here is your comfort, and you may build on this: though your affliction is sore, and though it may cause great harm to your body or estate (perhaps you lose all that you have, and, it may be, God delivers you into the hand of your enemies, and they trample on you as dirt), yet nothing of this tends to eternal wrath.

Though a wicked man may have a great many favors from God, fruits of His patience, yet no wicked man has ground to make such an interpretation of any good thing he enjoys from God, as to think that this does tend to his eternal good. By the

same token, believers, though they meet with never so great afflictions, yet do not have sufficient ground to make the interpretation that those afflictions tend to their utter undoing. And one would think that this would be enough to convince men that, whatsoever afflictions they meet with in this world, the wrath of God in all those afflictions is taken away. They shall not tend to their ruin and eternal misery. Though the afflictions themselves may remain, yet the poison of every affliction, which is the wrath of God, is taken away by Christ.

No, whatsoever befalls us in this world is so far from tending to eternal misery that it is, through the love of God, tending to your good. That which seems to be most cross to your desires is such as tends to your everlasting good in Christ. And this, one would think, is enough for the satisfaction of men's hearts in the point of afflictions. As what was delivered before may be enough concerning our freedom from the law, so what I have now written should be enough concerning being chastened for our sins.

So rest assured that no evil, no chastisement that shall befall us shall tend to our everlasting misery, no, nothing shall befall us but what is out of love and tends to our eternal good. These points being granted, one would think one might grant anything else: that God may show a fatherly displeasure against us for our sins, though not as an avenging judge; that God may exercise His wisdom in that way to manifest His holiness and how He dislikes sin. One would think this might safely be granted, given the other observations.

And indeed these points and the other concerning the law, all our divines who are orthodox grant, and these are enough to satisfy us about the free grace of God in Christ. Believers who are thoroughly riveted and grounded in this may come to keep the assurance of their peace with God. What could hinder it

but either their sins or God's afflictions? Now neither of these should hinder a believer's peace, but he may be able still to preserve it, looking on God through Christ. This is enough concerning the danger of losing the assurance of our peace through weakness.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

We May Lose the Assurance of Our Peace with God by Our Sinful Walking

*W*e may also come to lose our peace, the assurance of our peace with God, through sinfulness, through our loose and carnal walking with God. By this means we may come to fear that such walking cannot stand with the condition of a believer; and then, indeed, a believer is put in a quandry, and it will be a great while before he can be satisfied.

When a believer faces a daily infirmity, and when he continues to strive against it, he is easily satisfied; but when he comes near the point walking after the flesh—as indeed he may fall so foully you can scarcely perceive any difference between one who works after the flesh and him—this exceedingly clouds the light of God’s favor and exceedingly hinders the comfort of his peace with God. And oh, how justly may the Lord upbraid that person and say, “What, did I set that infinite wisdom of Mine at work to find out such a way of reconciliation with you? And is it worth no more than that you cast off the comfort of it that you

might give liberty to your looseness and negligence, and to let the flesh have satisfaction?”

And so Christ Himself may upbraid you: “What, shall I come from the bosom of My Father, and take on Me the form of a servant, and be made a curse that I might make peace between My Father and you, and is it worth no more than this: that you cast away the comfort of your assurance for such a sinful distemper of heart, to give you liberty to live after the flesh?”

Yes, the Holy Spirit may come and upbraid you: “What, shall I come, and reveal the deep counsels of God towards you, and show you what those things were that God from all eternity has done for you; shall I open the mysteries of Christ to you and draw your heart to Him; and shall I speak peace to you, and yet when all is done you should regard this so little as, for the satisfaction of some base distemper of heart, to lose that which I have thus brought to you—to lose the comfort of all that I have done for you?”

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may upbraid your negligence, and the looseness of your heart and life. Yes, and your own conscience may tell you: “Did not I often hint to you that if you gave liberty to yourself to walk like this, and this loosely, you shall lose your comfort, and you should come to apprehend God to be a terror to you?”

And will you, even in these days of trouble, when men cry out about fears and dangers, take such a foolish course as to lose your peace with God? Is there anything in the base distemper of your heart that can countervail this loss? Look on those who walk holy and close with God, and let their conversations upbraid you. They keep their hearts clean and maintain their peace with God, and when they lie down they do so in peace, and they awake in the comfortable assurance of their peace. And when they hear of wars and rumors of wars, yet as long as

they can look up to God as their reconciled Father, their hearts are fixed and stable. And though they suffer the spoiling of their goods, and the loss of all that is dear to them, yet they know that within their bosom there is that which will afford comfort enough to them.

And yet you, through giving satisfaction to some base and sinful distemper or lust, cannot think on God without terror; you cannot apprehend Him but as an enemy. O unworthy soul! How should you be confounded in your own thoughts for your looseness and negligence of heart in preserving that peace which Christ has wrought between the Father and you, so strangely and so wonderfully! Work these things (my brethren) on your hearts, and ground everything on this: that we are reconciled to God in Christ. Our reconciliation was wrought in such a strange way as by Christ, and it cost His blood to work it. Therefore, if we have any hope of our peace with God, we need to look to preserve it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Use 6: Give God the Glory of Our Reconciliation

*I*f God is reconciled to us in Christ, this teaches us to give God the glory of this great work. Adore the infinite wisdom, mercy, and goodness of God in this work of His toward us, reconciling us to Himself in Jesus Christ. When Christ was born, the angels sang, “Glory to God on high, peace on earth.” And it was on that ground that they sang it, as if they should have said, “O Lord, what a way is here for Thou to make peace on earth, that Thou shouldst send Thy Son!”

Here we look on a poor infant in a manger, and this infant is the eternal God, the second person in the Trinity, who has taken man’s nature on Him, and here He lies in the creche, even the same person who made the world. What a strange work of God is this to bring peace on earth, peace in such a way as this! Glory be to God on high! And this is the thing we should spend our days in: adoring the infinite wisdom and goodness of God in His way of reconciling the world to Himself in Christ. God expects that all the children of men to whom Christ comes to be made known should fall on their faces and spend their days in adoring and praising and magnifying this great work of God.

God expects that we should have mighty high thoughts of this work; and if our thoughts are not high of this work, and are not lifted up above all creatures, we do but take the name of God in vain. God does not care for any other glory we give Him unless we give Him the glory of this work. It is true, when we see the works of God in the earth and on the seas, we should glorify God's power and wisdom. But unless your heart is taken with this masterpiece (as I may so term it), with this great work of God of reconciling Himself to the world in Christ, God will reject all your other glorifying of Him. I mean He will so reject them as He will not accept them in comparison.

Therefore, the thing that God accepts above all, and the prime commandment of God, is that we should believe in His Son, and that we should give God the Father the glory due to Him for reconciling Himself to the world in His Son. This is the work that shall be done in heaven to all eternity. This is what God Himself delights in above all that ever He has done, which takes up His heart above all. And if it does not take up your hearts, but you look on it as an ordinary thing, and so indeed count the blood of Christ as a common thing, oh, know that it is a high indignity in that thing which He expects most glory from. And let me say this: has God revealed this work of His Son to you? Is your heart taken with this great work that God has done? Are you continually adoring the greatness of that work of God? If so, peace be to you, for this is as good an evidence that you are reconciled to God in Christ as any I know. But I must hasten.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Use 7: Love Christ, and Do or Suffer for Him

*A*gain, is it in Christ that we are reconciled to God? Oh, let Christ be loved by us! Let us say with the blessed martyr Lambert, “None but Christ, none but Christ,” which he spoke when he came to the stake to be burned for Christ. This is a good lesson for us, by the way, to learn who may come to suffer very hard things for that which we have undertaken to do in obedience to God. For us to rejoice when we come to suffer banishment, or loss of goods or life— to rejoice that ever our hearts were engaged in the ways of God—is a sign of grace indeed.

Many men can go on when things prosper, and rejoice that they were engaged in such a business; but if they find that it shall not prosper in terms of outward success, and that there are many miscarriages, they repent of what they have done. That is the reason why we have so many run away now, who have withdrawn themselves from that which before they would spend their lives and dearest blood in. And they not only withdraw themselves when they see the work a little hot, but betray the cause.

But here is a trial of godliness: if I have engaged myself in the ways of God, and God by His providence casts me into such ways as bring trouble to me, yet can I rejoice that ever I was engaged in them. Thus it was with the blessed martyr who cried out, "None but Christ," even when he was at the stake for Christ. A carnal heart might say, "Yes, Lambert, before you rejoiced in Christ and talked of Christ, but what say you now that you come to be burned for Christ? Had you kept Christ within yourself, you might have preserved this body of yours." Oh, no, Christ was even then sweet to this man when he was going to suffer for Him, and even then he wanted "none but Christ."

And, indeed, there is cause sufficient for Christ to be dear and sweet to us even in the midst of all sufferings. It is true, it may cause us to have the world to be our enemy; but what of that when Christ has made peace between us and God the Father? This satisfies the soul of a man to the fullest, and therefore the soul will love Him and rejoice in Him, and bless God that ever he was engaged in any cause for the sake of Christ, because Christ is his blessed reconciler, and because Christ has made a peace between God and his heart. Although men are his enemies, yet he knows that through Christ God is his friend. Christ has made men our enemies indeed, but it is accidentally. But He has made God our friend. And He Himself said, "Do you think I came to bring peace? No, I came to bring a sword."

Through the profession of the gospel there is a great deal of enmity among men, and I believe Christ Himself, accidentally, is the cause of this rage and enmity that is on foot here in England. On the one side, the desire of God's people is for a thorough reformation, and, on the other side, the hatred of men's spirits against Christ and His ordinances will rather undo themselves than Christ shall have any glory. They will rather put their necks under an antichristian yoke, yes, under the yoke

of slavery, and make themselves and their posterity slaves than to be under the yoke of Christ. And this is the very bottom of that bitter malice and rage that is now in the hearts of men, for there was never the like example of a people who should be enraged one against another in their own mind.

We might have peace, and we might have liberty, if we would unite ourselves as one man against papists, and against others who are notorious and abominably wicked, to subdue them. But now, because that peace and liberty would bring in reformation with it, and men would not have that liberty for their lusts as heretofore they have had, instead they will have no peace at all. They will rather be slaves to the wills and lusts of men, and to the devil, than come under Christ's yoke. Thus the gospel is, in great part, the cause of the sword by accident.

What, though? Shall we not love God therefore? Shall we say, "Since there was so much preaching and profession, we have such and such wars, strife, and troubles; would men be quiet and contented, they might be at peace"? Oh, what is this but to be contented to be without Christ, without truth, without peace of conscience! So because we would fain have these—that is, we would fain have Christ, and fain have the gospel and truth and peace of conscience—we can have no peace with men, but yet blessed be God for Christ. For although Christ is as a bundle of mirth that has much bitterness in it, yet let Him lie between your breasts; let us rejoice in Him; let us love Him; let us bless God for Him, and be glad that ever we were engaged in His cause. Oh, that great Peacemaker between God and us, how dear should He be to our hearts! And as that martyr said when he was to suffer for Him, "What have I but one life to lay down for Christ? Oh, that I had many!" So should we say, "What, is our life in danger for Christ? Oh, that we had many lives that might be all in danger for Him."

I heard a credible story of a young man who was in the conflict in Kent. He was shot through the shoulder, and fell down as dead; and for awhile he lay as dead, but recovering, and having strength enough to discharge a musket, he said, "Well, I will spend one life more for this cause." The truth is, had we one, yes, a hundred, a thousand lives, we might very well bestow them in a cause wherein we might testify to our love to Christ, and bless God that ever we were engaged in it, though it has brought such a disturbance between man and man.

And let this be one particular wherein you manifest your love to Jesus Christ as the great Reconciler, namely that you are willing to be reconciled one to another, to be reconciled to your brethren for His sake. This is one good way to manifest your love to Christ.

It may be that such and such people have wronged you, and there is a great breach between such a neighbor and you. A natural man may be willing to be reconciled on natural grounds; it is a troublesome thing to be in contention, and it is more comfortable to be at peace with one's neighbor. And so, through a natural love for peace, some will be contented that there should be peace made between them and the others they are fallen out with.

It is good to go so far. But it is still better when you can bring yourselves to this not only out of love for peace, because it is good for neighbors to be reconciled, but when you can think thus: "Christ has reconciled my soul when I was an enemy to God. He has come down from the bosom of His Father and laid down His life for me. And Christ is dishonored when there are such breaches between friend and friend. Therefore, out of love to Jesus Christ, who has reconciled my soul to the Father, I am willing out of that very principle to be at peace with others."

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE


Use 8: Seek Reconciliation by Christ

Last, if it is in Christ that we are reconciled to God, let us all learn in seeking reconciliation to eye Christ and carry Him in our arms. If there are any of you who now begin to have your consciences stirred, and to be made sensible of the breach that is between God and you, do not rest in seeking peace in a natural way, but eye Jesus Christ. And when you look up to God for peace, look to Him in Christ. Look on Christ as the second person of the Trinity taking our nature on Him. Look on Christ as the Head of the covenant of grace. Look on Christ as the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world who has made peace with His blood. Look on Christ as sitting at the right hand of the Father making intercession.

Thus you should place your faith on God in Christ when you are seeking peace with God. The reason why many people lay under the spirit of bondage for many years together is because they look on God merely as He is in Himself, and do not look on God through Christ. So they do not sanctify the name of God in this great work of reconciliation.

CHAPTER THIRTY

God Was Reconciling the World to Himself from All Eternity

 And thus we have gone through that point of God being reconciled to us in Christ. We now proceed to the sixth thing propounded in the first chapter, namely, when God was reconciling the world to Himself in His Son. The work of our reconciliation is not a work of yesterday; it is a work that God was doing from all eternity. The verse says that God was *about* this work; for God to reconcile us to Himself in His Son has taken up the heart of God from all eternity. In Titus 1:2, what the apostle writes is most remarkable: “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” He not only promised it now, but He promised it before the world began. Who was there before the world began to whom God made this promise? There was His Son, Jesus Christ.

So, then, that is what the apostle meant when he said God was reconciling Himself to the world: that there was from all eternity a transaction, as it were, between God the Father and

God the Son about our reconciliation. There was not only a purpose in God from all eternity, that He would reconcile the world to Himself, but there was a real and actual transaction, an agreement, between the Father and Son about it.

So, first, God's wisdom from all eternity was exercised to find out a way; second, God's purpose was from all eternity to do it; third, there was a transaction between God the Father and God the Son from all eternity for to do it. They covenanted one with another. God the Father told His Son what He required of Him, and God the Son promised to the Father to do it. There was such a transaction as this, and therefore the Scripture says, "It was promised before the world began." God the Father promised to His Son before the world began what He would do for those for whom He would die. It is as if He had said, "You are content to lay down Your life, and to shed Your blood?"

"Yes," said the Son, "I am."

"Well," said the Father, "I will be reconciled to them, and I will save their souls. They shall have eternal life for their portion; this I promise You."

And so it was promised to Christ first. It is true, the promises of the gospel are sweet and should rejoice our hearts. "I should have perished in my afflictions," said David, "had I not had regard to Thy word" (Psalm 119:92). Nothing is more sweet to a soul than the promises are; but though the promises that are made to us in the gospel are sweet, yet the promise that was made to the Son of God is infinitely more sweet. And this is the thing that I should show you: not only how this was promised to Christ, but the excellent comfort that this is to the saints, that they are now to look on all that is done to them, and on all the works of God's grace to them, not as a new thing, not as an accidental thing that comes.

If we would have peace here in the commonwealth it would

be precious to us if it should be on these terms, and we would all rejoice much in what should befall us in a way of a safe peace. But our peace with God is not wrought with God as if we were perishing, and then God's providence came and turned all about again. No, our peace with God was plotted from all eternity. God did, as it were, contrive it in heaven before any world was made. God thought of this work of reconciling Himself to the world, yes, to you in particular if you are a believer, a broken-hearted sinner, before even the heavens or the earth was made. God had actual thoughts of you then, and there was a covenant between God the Father and the Son for your soul in particular. And though God foresaw you would sin against Him, and became an enemy to Him, yet there was a consultation between the Father and the Son from all eternity to bring your soul home to God and pardon your sin.

So that you are to look on all the works of God's grace towards you here in bringing you to His Son, and on all the comforts you have from His Son, as the fruit of God's eternal plot, of God's eternal counsel with His Son. And although it does but now break forth, yet it was in the bosom of the Father and the Son from all eternity. And this indeed will sweeten our reconciliation with God, and all means tending thereto. Does God send the word of reconciliation to bring you home to Christ? This was that which God contrived in His heart from all eternity—that in such a time, such a man should live in such a place, and such a minister should be sent among them, and such a text of Scripture should be opened, and such truths should be preached. And if you find God bringing these truths home to your soul, know it is a fruit of that eternal counsel that was between the Father and the Son before the world began, and a branch of the promise that God made to His Son from all eternity.

Do you, when you come to the Word, begin to feel your mind enlightened to know Jesus Christ? Does your heart begin to be melted? Is your soul drawing after Christ? Do not look on this as a mere accidental thing. Do not say only, "What a providence of God it is that called me to such a sermon! At such time I went for company's sake to such a place, but when I came I felt the Spirit of God stirring in my soul. Yes, I find a beginning of that for which I hope I shall have cause to bless God, forever." Do not look on this as a mere accidental thing, or as an act of providence only, but know that this very work of God towards you is no other than the fruit of the promise that God made to His Son before the world began. God promised His Son that it should be so ordered that at such a time there should be such a text and such a sermon preached, and that it should so fall out that you should be there.

And so, likewise, any peace of conscience, any work of grace whatsoever, is a fruit of this promise. And therefore, rejoice in this: that God's heart is broken open to you, and that which was in His bosom from all eternity is made known to you.

Those men who are not converted until they are old have cause to be sorrowful, and to be troubled for that: "It is true that I have cause to bless God, that at length God is pleased to open His heart to me; but what a mystery it is to me that I lived so long before I came to know God the Father's purpose to my heart! Had I embraced the gospel first, I would have then been made acquainted with the counsel of God from all eternity concerning me." And a mighty encouragement it is to young people to bless God for this, that God begins with them betimes! It is a sign that God's heart is full when He begins with one so early. For the truth is, God's heart was towards you from everlasting, and the business was transacted from everlasting.

With some people, though the heart of God is towards them, yet He keeps it a long time from breaking open until they grow to their middle age, until old age perhaps, and then He discloses Himself. As Joseph would not open his heart to his brethren for many days together, so there are many people whom God lets go on for a long while in ways of sin. He withdraws and denies Himself to open His heart to them, but at length He does. But then how much better is it when God shall open His heart betimes to a man? Would not Joseph's brethren have been glad that he should have discovered himself to them, and opened his heart to them at the first coming? So with you who begin now to have the day of grace dawn to your understandings, and to whom God begins betimes to open Himself and show you those things that were in His heart before the beginning of the world. And God cannot (as we may speak with reverence) stay any longer; but as soon as you are able to receive those thoughts of the heart of God, He lets them out to you. Oh, bless God for it.

And this will prevent an abundance of sin and sorrow, and make you go on with comfort all your days. This point also should be a marvelous comfort to the people of God, that their peace with God does not so much depend on the covenant God has made with them, but it depends on the covenant God has made with Jesus Christ from all eternity. And that is the root and bottom of their peace and reconciliation with God. Alas, were it a dependence on a covenant between us and God, and what He requires of us, we could not have firm peace. But when we know that the root and ground of our peace and happiness depend on the Son from all eternity, and on the covenant that was between them, oh, this is that which should rejoice the hearts of the saints and be a mighty foundation of their faith, and enable them to go through the world and all difficulties with comfort!

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

The Work of Our Reconciliation with God in Christ Has Been Going On from All Eternity

*I*n the last chapter we came to the sixth point that was initially propounded in the first chapter: God was reconciling Himself to the world in Christ. When was He doing that? From all eternity He was reconciling Himself to the world. I shall now expound the point:

DOCTRINE. **The work of our reconciliation with God in Christ is not a work of yesterday, it is a work that has been happening from all eternity.**

It is not a thing that falls out, as it were, accidentally, but it has been plotted from all eternity. I gave you then but one Scripture for it. I shall add some more now, and open it more fully. That Scripture I cited previously is Titus 1:2: “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”

Now to whom did God promise it before the world began? The first promise we read of that was made was to Adam in paradise, that the seed of the woman would break the serpent's head. Oh, but there was a promise beyond that promise, a promise made before Adam was, before the angels were, or before the world began—a promise of eternal life, which is the accomplishment of our reconciliation with God. This promise could be made to no other but the Son of God who was with the Father and was the delight of the Father. He was not only the delight of the Father, as He is the Son eternally begotten of the Father, but He was the delight of the Father as He undertook the great work of reconciliation between God and us. And this great promise was made to Him from the Father: the promise of reconciliation and eternal life before the world began.

So that by that Scripture it appears that there was, from all eternity, not only a purpose or a determination in God to reconcile us to Himself, but there was an agreement, a transaction between the Father and the Son about it, a covenant passed between them. God the Father promised something, and the Son promised something, and so they made up the agreement one with another from all eternity.

First, there was a transaction of this great work of reconciliation between God the Father and the Son from all eternity, and to show this I shall give you a Scripture or two more. "Who hath saved, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). Here is not only a purpose, but here is grace besides purpose. There was not only a purpose in God before the world began, but there was something more. Here is purpose and grace, and this is given to us too. It is not only

intended for us (that is observable), but it was given to us before the world began.

How was it given to us? Could God give anything to us before the world began? Could God give anything to us before we were? It is therefore added that "it was His purpose and grace, given to us in Christ before the world began." It is possible for an inheritance to be made over to someone before he is born. Sometimes, between men, there is something made over thus, to "our heirs lawfully begotten"; though there are none born, yet it is given them, and there is solemnity in law concerning it. Perhaps it is given to some as a trust, that if such and such should be born, they should enjoy it; or that they shall employ this for the benefit of such and such who shall be born. So Jesus Christ stood before the Father (as we may so term it) as a trustee, as the head of a covenant; and there were transactions between the Father and Him. There was not only a purpose in God to reconcile Himself to us, but there was grace given to us in Christ. There was an actual donation of this to Christ before the world began that we might come to enjoy it.

Again, another Scripture speaks something of this also, though not altogether as fully as the former: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). The apostle not only speaks here of God's electing and ordaining us to glory, but he speaks of the whole mystery of the gospel, which he calls the hidden wisdom of God. Now this doctrine of reconciliation which I have been preaching to you, that we are reconciled to God in Christ, is the hidden wisdom of God which was kept hidden from the beginning of the world, and yet ordained before the world to our glory. God had contrived all this doctrine of reconciliation, and

purposed that in time it should come to be revealed to us as it is at this day.

John 17 is yet another very remarkable Scripture for this. In that chapter you shall find many expressions that those who believed in Christ were such as God the Father had given Him. And you may find by divers expressions that apparently there was an agreement, a transaction between the Father and the Son, long before the thing was done. Verse 6: "I have manifested Thy name to the men Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me, and they have kept Thy word." He does not speak merely of the Father giving them at this time, but giving them to the Son before now, for He makes that to be the ground of their belief. He does not equate giving them to Him with their believing, but He makes their believing and keeping the word of faith to be a fruit of God's giving them to His Son. The Father's giving them to His Son is the foundation of their believing, and hence it is that in time they come to believe, because God the Father has from all eternity given them to His Son. That is the argument of Christ, and this indeed makes the difference between some who believe and others who do not believe.

There are some who are of mean parts, poor people and young ones who believe in Jesus Christ and the great mysteries of the gospel. Others who have more understanding, learned men, do not believe. That which makes the difference is this: God the Father gave some to His Son to reconcile and He did not give others. This is the argument of Christ in John 17. He makes the foundation of their faith to be God the Father's giving them to the Son.

So it is apparent in Scripture that there was (before we came to believe, yea, before the world was) a transaction between the Father and the Son about our reconciliation. God

was reconciling Himself to the world, so that our reconciliation with God, and our having our sins not imputed to us, must be considered in three periods of time.

The first is (if we may call that a period of time which rather was before time) that which was from all eternity with the Son. There God was reconciling Himself to us.

The second is when Christ came into the world, and was on the cross and suffered. There was an actual imputation of the sins of all the elect unto Him, and laying them upon Christ. There was then a special act of God imputing and charging upon His Son the sins of all the elect.

The third is when God calls any sinner to believe. Then there is another act of God passing the sentence of absolution on the soul, an actual passing of it, which we call justification.

This is how it is between man and man. You know that the law may be satisfied for the prisoner, and yet the prisoner may not be absolved. The prisoner is not acquitted until the sentence is solemnly pronounced by the judge. Though the verdict is brought in—"not guilty"—yet he is not acquitted until the judge pronounces the sentence of absolution. So, though Jesus Christ in His sufferings, when He was crucified, satisfied the law for all who should believe in Him, yet there is required a pronouncing of the sentence by the judge for the acquitting of that believer, which is our justification.

And yet sometimes we know that, after the sentence is pronounced by the judge, the malefactor may lie in prison until the fees are paid. Just so it is with us. After our justification, we remain in this world, and have the fetters of our corruption on us. We have the fetters of afflictions and troubles on us until we have paid the dues to nature and the dispensations of God's providence.

One who is elect, and not yet a believer, is as a prisoner who

has the law satisfied for him, though he does not know it; yet certainly he shall be saved.

One who is elect, and has become a believer, is a prisoner who has the judge pronouncing the sentence of absolution on him. Yet afterwards, as long as the believer is in the world, he is like a prisoner who has had his sentence pronounced on him to acquit him, but who lies in prison until he has paid his fees.

But those in heaven have not only the law satisfied and the fees paid, but they are set at liberty also, and are in their Father's house. There are several stages, therefore, of God's manifesting our reconciliation to us in not imputing our sins to us.

But though there are such several workings of God, yet this does not argue any change in God, which is an objection that many through weakness make. Because God does this and the other thing, and the other thing that was not done before, therefore they argue that there must be a change in God. Since such a change is impossible, they conclude that there is nothing that is now done but was already done, and that as it is now done so it was done everlastingly. But we are to know that God's actual pronouncing of a sentence of absolution now that was not done before no more argues a change in God than does God's glorifying the saints in heaven now who were not glorified before. To be justified in time no more argues a change in God than to be glorified in time argues it. The saints on earth are not yet glorified, and yet they shall be glorified; and that argues no change in God. So the elect who are not yet believers are not yet justified in the sense in which the Scripture speaks of justification, yet they shall be justified. And that argues no change in God.

But that we may further understand how God was from all eternity reconciling Himself to the world, yet there are several

periods of time associated with several workings of God toward a sinner, which indeed are implied in the words of the text. God was reconciling the world to Himself. He was doing it, and this work, before it comes to its accomplishment, has several periods of time.

And to the end that you may understand it better, you must know that there is a great deal of difference between those actions of God which are in Himself, according to His own nature, and those actions of His towards the creature that are in a suitable way to the creature. And for the want of a right understanding of the difference between these two, many people most grossly mistake and gather many absurd conclusions. They argue from God's infinite and inconceivable way of acting in Himself, to those acts of God that are suitable to the creature and received by the creature. When they hear anything of the workings of God received by the creature, they understand that in the same manner, or as if it were to be understood in the same manner as those acts of God in Himself. I will show you how great a difference there is between them.

First, take the acts of God in Himself. It is true that, since the act of God is the being of God Himself, God's essence and His act in Himself are alone. But now the act of God as the creature receives it is not the essence of God, for the creature is not capable of God's essence. For then the creature would be infinite. But the act of God, as it is in Himself, is God Himself; and so it is infinite. There is no act as it is in God but it is an infinite act, because it is God.

In contrast, that which the creature receives cannot be infinite. So the acts of God in Himself are all eternal, and there is no difference of time with God. There is not time past, present, and to come. Whatsoever act there is in God,

even the glorifying of the saints, so far as considered in God, is eternal, and there is no difference of time at all in the acts of God, as in Himself. But if we consider those acts as the creature receives them, then we must look at the difference of time, one at one time, and another at another time, as received by the creature. And you must take heed of too much boldness when we speak of God. When God sometimes manifests His workings as the creature receives, we must not then think that these are the acts of God as they are in Himself, which are infinite, and to be conceived of in an infinite manner. For nothing but an infinite understanding is able to reach and to conceive of those acts of God.


Therefore, those men who think to fathom the acts of God as they are in Himself are too presumptuous, for only an infinite understanding is able to conceive of them. We must conceive of them as the creature receives them, and so as they are revealed in the Word. And this is the substance of what is revealed concerning God's working toward us, namely that from eternity there was a transaction between Him and the Son in such an inconceivable manner as we know not of, and that in time the Lord laid our sins on His Son on the cross. And afterwards, when His good time shall come to call a sinner to Himself, then He justifies him and pronounces a sentence of absolution. But first He calls them, as the Scripture says: "Those whom He hath called, He hath justified" (Romans 8:30).

The Scripture places the calling of a sinner before justification; therefore, whatsoever is in God from eternity, it is apparent that (speaking of justification as the Scripture speaks of it) calling goes before, and that justification is no otherwise from eternity than calling. God may as truly be said to call a sinner out of his natural state from eternity as to justify a sinner from eternity in that sense that the Scripture speaks of in

Romans 8. But, when we speak of justification, ordinarily, we speak of it in the sense that the Scripture speaks of it here; so calling is first, then justification, and afterwards glorification. So though the Lord is pleased to reveal much of the mystery of the gospel to us, and tell us He has been reconciling Himself to us from eternity, yet we must understand this in a sober way, and take heed we do not vanish in our own thoughts when we come to search into it.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Five Uses of the Former Doctrine

 word or two further for the application of this (for something has been already done in the last chapter), and then we will pass to another point.

USE 1. Here we see the infinite love of God, that He has been pleased to think of us poor creatures from everlasting and make it His work to reconcile us to Himself. And here is the foundation of the sweetness and comfort of all the mercies of God to those who are reconciled to Him: they are the fruits of the eternal love of God for us. And here is the foundation likewise of the establishment of the saints: their happiness does not depend so much on the covenant that God has made between Himself and them as upon the covenant that God has made between Himself and His Son. For the covenant is twofold, either between God and Christ, or between Christ and us. Now, it is true, much depends on our keeping covenant with Christ, but our happiness, our salvation, and, indeed, all our good chiefly depend on the covenant between the Father and the Son.

USE 2. Again, here we may see how to answer that question of some atheists: "What was God doing before the world began?" I remember it is said that when that question was asked by some in the primitive times the answer was that God was making hell for such curious inquisitors. But here we have a further answer to give them, namely that God was exercised from all eternity in the business of reconciling the world to Himself. God had (as it were) the idea and the platform of all things before Him, and saw how man was made in his innocence, and saw him fall, and saw how he should rise again, and how he should be converted and glorified. All the platform of these things was before God for all eternity. When a workman goes to build a house or a ship, he has the platform in his head before he strikes a stroke. So the great work of our election, of our vocation, justification, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, and glorification, the Lord had the platform of all before Him. It was all in His head, as it were, and He was exercised about it before the world began.

So if you are a believer, it now comes to be known that the Lord, from all eternity, was exercised about you and your good, about the contrivance of your salvation, and foresaw how you would fall from Him, and be made a child of wrath and an heir of hell. And then He saw a way to recover you out of that condition, how to bring this to pass; how He would cast your lot to live in such a place and in such an age of the world where the gospel and the mysteries thereof should be preached; and that you should come under such a ministry; and that just at the preaching of such a sermon, such a truth should be darted into your heart and applied to you; and that then He would send His Holy Spirit to fasten that truth on your heart.

The Lord plotted all this from eternity, and this is that

which the Lord was busied about (as we may speak with reverence) before the world began.

USE 3. It is good, in order to help us believe that eternal happiness lies before us, to see God revealing His love to us in that part of eternity that is behind us. God has shown that from eternity He has been plotting our good. Surely, then, it is no more difficult for God to make us happy on the other side of eternity than it was for Him to be plotting our happiness in the former part of eternity. So a believer may see his happy condition in that he is now enjoying that peace of God's love that is between two oceans of eternity of love. It is as if there were a little river, and on each side there were a mighty ocean of water. Now the stream of God's love and mercy runs towards you, and you now receive an abundance of good from God.

The Lord sweetens your life, and now comforts and refreshes your heart with His grace. Are you glad of this, and is this peace of the mercy of God sweet to you? Poor soul, look on this side and look on the other side, and see those oceans of eternal love on both sides of you. Alas, this is a little that you have now; but if you look on one side there you shall see that eternal love of God that was toward you before the world was made! And if you look on the other side, you shall see eternal life in all that glory which shall never have an end, which you shall actually be possessed of. And that which you possess is a little stream in comparison to these two great oceans of love that are from eternity to eternity.

And when you hear that God intends to make you happy forever, and that you shall continue a glorious and blessed creature as long as God Himself shall live, and that you shall be happy as long as God shall be happy, perhaps you think, "How is this possible? Is it possible for such a poor frail creature as I am to live to be happy as long as God Himself shall be happy?"

Yes, do not doubt it, though it is a great thing. For God has had a love for you from all eternity. Therefore, though it is true that you have many frailties and sins, yet that cannot hinder you from that eternal mercy that God has been plotting for you. I think the apostle argues after this manner: "The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Galatians 3:17).

Observe the apostle's argument: the law (says he) cannot disannul the promise of grace. Why not? Because it was four hundred and thirty years after the promise was made, and that which came so long after cannot disannul that which was made before. We may make use of the argument thus: surely, if you are one who belongs to this transaction of God with His Son, the sins that now you fall into cannot take away God's love from you. They cannot hinder you from being happy forever. Why not? Because the covenant of God with His Son for your happiness was not four hundred and thirty years ago, but hundreds of millions of thousands years ago. Therefore, that which is now done cannot disannul that which was from all eternity. Comfort yourself with this when you hear that God was reconciling Himself to the world even before the world was, yes, from all eternity.

USE 4. Again, this doctrine should stir all to begin betimes to get grace and reconciliation with God. You who are young, and are now in the flower of your youth crowned with rosebuds, consider this: God was working for your good before the world; you should be working for His glory as soon as you can. Shall not I give the beginning of my years, my first fruits, to God who loved me, and was working for me before ever I was born? Therefore it is fitting that He should have as much of my time as can be.

USE 5. Yes, this should also be a mighty argument to cause us all to be constant in holy walking with God. The Lord has been working from eternity, and will be working to eternity, for our good; and, therefore, with that time which we have we should serve and glorify God. For suppose we should live ten thousand years, or ten thousand million years in this world; or suppose God should require us to live for Him and serve Him in the way we do now eternally. We would not think much of it, for we serve God in but one piece of eternity, that is, the part of eternity which is coming; but God is merciful to us in both pieces of eternity. His mercy to us is on both sides from everlasting to everlasting. God is beforehand with us in His mercy and in His love. His love was from eternity, and shall continue to eternity; and therefore we should not think it much to serve and glorify God in ways of holiness all the time that we are appointed to live. And when we have done all, we cannot come near to those workings which He has been at for us. But I shall leave this point. May the Lord seal it with His blessing on our spirits.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Of God's Reconciling the World to Himself

*T*he next point, being the seventh propounded in the first chapter, is that God was reconciling *the world* to Himself. That which we have in the text here is the very same in effect as what we have in John 3:16: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

The world will say, “How is that? Did God reconcile the world to Himself?”

No, we are therefore to understand this saying as an indefinite proposition, and not as if it were a universal proposition. And the right understanding of this difference between a universal and an indefinite proposition is of great use to us, both in this and many other points of divinity. A universal proposition is that which speaks so of the general as it includes every particular under it; an indefinite proposition, while it speaks of the general, does not include every particular under it, but only many.

For example, if one should say that such a man teaches all

the children in such a town, we do not mean that there is no particular child who is not taught, for there are infants there. There are perhaps some who are not taught at all, but we mean that he teaches those children who are taught. There is none that he excepts, but if they come to him, he will teach them; he is there ready and stands prepared to teach them. And in this sense he may be said to teach all the children in the town. That is, there is a general proposition without a particular restriction, though every individual is not contained in it. This is an indefinite proposition. But when we speak of a general proposition, then we speak of all particulars. None at all can be excepted, but must come under that proposition.

And this distinction will help us much in other points of divinity, such as in the promise, "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed" (Genesis 17:7). We must understand this promise as an indefinite proposition, and so all understand it who understand it aright.

Many who do not understand the difference between these two think they have a strong objection, and say, "This promise cannot be made of the godly, for then the children of the godly would be godly too." No, it is not a universal proposition that includes every particular, but an indefinite one: God promises to be the God of His people and of their seed, that is, He will show mercy to their seed rather than to the seed of others. He will rather draw the line of election through their loins than through the loins of others. He will take them, not every particular of them, but take them indefinitely, and not reveal which of them He will take, whether this person or that person individually. But He speaks indefinitely, and His meaning is that those who are the seed of His people shall be brought into a nearer pale, into a nearer limit of God's grace than the seed of others. He will be gracious to their seed rather than to others.

And so here, when Scripture says that God saved the world and reconciled the world, the propositions are also to be understood indefinitely, not that He loves or reconciles every individual person in the world, even as He is the God of the seed of the saints. It is not to be understood that He is the God of every particular one of them. He is pleased to express Himself thus indefinitely and not generally.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

God's Reconciling the World to Himself Cannot Mean Every Individual Man Is Proved by Scripture

*G*od is reconciling Himself to the world, that is, to mankind, to human nature, though not to every individual person in human nature. I shall show you, first, that it cannot be meant of every individual, and then, second, why it is expressed in such a broad term as “the world.”

First, I shall make it appear that it cannot mean every particular man or woman in the world. No, indeed, the truth is that there are many in the world—indeed, they are sometimes referred to as “the world”—whom Christ has rejected and shall never be reconciled to. And that is clear from John 17, where Christ said that He prayed “not for the world.” Surely, then, He died not for the world. There are some in the world whom Christ did not so much as pray for. How was God reconciling Himself to the world, then, when, as Christ professed, He did not even *pray* for the world? It appears by this that we are not to understand it of every particular man or woman in the

world. There are some who are in the world whom God was never reconciling Himself unto.

1. And besides this text, it appears from hence: because if God were reconciling Himself to all the world, then all should certainly believe and be saved. Why? Because Christ should lay down a price for all, and the blood of Christ as well pardons the sin of unbelief as any other sin. If there is anyone whom Christ has laid down His life for, He has purchased at the hands of God the Father that this soul should be delivered from the power of unbelief. And faith is a blessing that comes to us by Christ as well as any other blessing. I appeal to you: is not faith a spiritual blessing as much as any other grace? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

So all spiritual blessings are in Christ. If they are in Christ, then faith is in Christ, for faith is a spiritual blessing. And then Christ has purchased faith, for whosoever Christ has died for must come to believe in time; Christ has not left the work of our salvation to depend on an uncertainty, as if to say, "I will lay down My life, and, if men believe, they shall be reconciled." No, Christ laid down His life to purchase from God the Father that men should believe just as much as He has purchased eternal life itself. And therefore, if you believe, know that it is the fruit of the purchase of Christ as much as heaven itself is. So, then, if God were reconciled to all the world, all would come and be actual believers; but since they do not, it is apparent that Christ never intended it.

2. Another argument is this: if it were so that Christ had laid down a price for the world in general, and if people were left to themselves to believe or not believe, and so determine whether

they would be saved, then the great things that are contained in these great mysteries of godliness and the great works of God—both in election, redemption, justification, and glorification—must rather depend on man's will than on any work of God. For say they, "God indeed has wrought all this, but it depends on whether or not men believe. He has left it to them to believe or not believe, and so all the great counsels of God must depend on man's will." No, certainly Christ has not left it so, but those whom He has reconciled to God, He has so reconciled them to Him as that they shall believe, and this group is not all the world.

3. Further, if it were so that Christ has paid a price and then left it to man's free will to believe or not believe, the truth is that Judas would have been as much beholden to Christ for salvation as Peter.

But you will say, "Judas was never saved, but Peter was." But according to these men, Christ did as much for Judas as for Peter, for He shed His blood for Judas as well as for Peter. Only Peter, by the act of his free will, believed, and the other did not. So that the truth is, according to the doctrine of these men, Peter shall be no more beholden to Christ at the day of judgment than Judas was. Peter indeed must acknowledge that he was saved by Christ, but if their doctrine is true, he may well say, "Lord, Thou hast done no more for me than for Judas, and the rest I did myself. Thou sheddest Thy blood alike for us, but I believed, and he did not. If he had believed he might have been saved as well as I."

So hereby the grace of God is exceedingly dishonored by these men who hold to universal redemption by Christ, and make it include all the world. There are many arguments that might be used which, because they are not so clear to the

ordinary capacities of people, we shall not mention at this time. I shall only add that it is Arminian doctrine to teach that Christ has paid a price for all the world, and that it is left to men to believe or not to believe.

It is true evangelical doctrine that Christ has paid a price, and that God has resolved which particular ones in the world He will be reconciled to, and that they shall believe and be everlastingly saved.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Why God's Reconciling to Himself Is Expressed by So Broad a Term as "the World"

But you will say, "If God has made such a distinction, that there are some whom He has been from all eternity reconciling Himself to and not all, then what is the reason for this phrase? Why does He say that He loved the world, and that He was reconciling Himself to the world, without any distinction? One would think that God would rather have expressed it thus: that He was reconciling Himself to *some* in the world, and that He loved *some* in the world and not the world in general."

No, God would rather express it by this general phrase for these six reasons:

REASON 1. First, He would say "the world" to exclude angels who are not so properly of this world. But this does not fully explain the reason why God would rather say "the world" than "this or that man in the world."

REASON 2. Another reason is that He would show the sufficiency of the death of Christ and the work of redemption, that there is enough in it to save never so many worlds.

REASON 3. Another reason for it is so that God might show that in the ministry of the gospel none shall be excluded, no, not the worst of sinners who are in the world. And therefore God does not say in the ministry of the gospel "this or that particular man or woman Christ died for," but, generally, "He died for the world." He would hereby show that He has not excluded the worst and most vile sinner in the world, and that those who are the most notorious and greatest sinners in the world may come in and be reconciled.

If God had expressed it thus: "There are some in the world whom I have been reconciling Myself unto from all eternity," then many a sinner would say, "Surely, if there are but some, God never intended me, who have been so wicked a wretch, so notorious a sinner." But therefore God would not express it so, but in the most general terms, to the end that there should not be any one sinner in the world who would have this plea: "Lord, I was excluded."

"No," says God, "I will have the ministry of My gospel go in such general terms that every sinner shall have encouragement to come in and receive mercy." Therefore you shall find in Mark 16:15, where Christ gave His commission to His disciples to preach, He said, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," that is, to man, who is a little world, an epitome of every creature; to the Gentiles also, who had been denied this favor of the gospel, as if they had been none of God's creatures. If you are a creature, the gospel is to be preached to you.

There is to be a general offer of grace and mercy to every creature throughout the whole world, to the greatest sinners

who live on the face of the earth. Great sinners and small sinners, all of them are to have the offer of reconciliation with God. And the ministers of the gospel are to preach in the name of God that the Lord renders to everyone this offer of mercy and salvation. This to be done ministerially to every creature we come to preach to—not only great sinners, but those who are of the meanest condition in the world. For some may say, “If God will show mercy to some in the world, surely it must be to some great ones in the world, those who are eminent and may do Him a great deal of service. Alas, what service can God have from me, a poor creature who lives all day long in a poor, dark hole, who can do Him no work or service? Will ever God have any thought of me?”

Yes, if you are a creature of God and live in the world, you are no more excluded from reconciliation with God than the kings and emperors of the earth. God may think of you in that poor hole of yours, a thatched cottage, when He neglects and passes by the great monarchs of the world. Therefore, this expression is so broad that those who are the poorest people in the world, the greatest sinners in the world, may know they are not excluded from the offers of grace in the gospel.

REASON 4. Hereby the Lord may show that those who actually come in to be reconciled to Him must come in while they are in this world. Those persons who are capable of reconciliation are only such persons as live in the world. If they are not reconciled before they are gone out of the world, they are never to be reconciled. Therefore it is stated that God is reconciling the world to Himself. It is as if He should say, “Once you are gone out of the world, and if you are not reconciled to God before you are gone, you are lost forever. The object of My grace is only those people who live in the world; if they pass away this time and are not reconciled to Me while they live here, they shall never be

reconciled.” For God was not reconciling Himself to men who are in hell, for they are not of this world; they are gone out of the world. They were suffered by God’s patience to live a great while in the world, and here they filled the world with sin as much as in them lay. Now they are gone out of the world, and are gone from the shining of God’s grace, which shall never come to shine on them again. They shall never come to hear any offer of the gospel again.

REASON 5. Hereby God will show His wonderful love and free grace to wretched creatures, that He should regard such vile creatures as those who live in the world. For the world, alas, what is it? It is a dunghill of filth. And, as the apostle said, “The whole world lies in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). It lies as a dead dog or carcass lies in a common sewer, in a ditch, all in slime and filth. Now, that God should set His heart on the world, what an infinite, wonderful love and free grace is this! The truth is that before our conversion we all lay in wickedness, as a carrion or a dead dog that lies in an alley, all in gore and mire. So we are in our natural condition, and yet, that the great God of heaven should send His own Son into the world to die for such a one, that He should make such a one an heir of heaven and eternal life, that such a one should become a member of His Son and so have everlasting communion with Himself, and that this should be plotted by God from all eternity—what an infinite love of God is this! And again, that the world lies in wickedness, that world that is so vile and so unworthy a thing, and yet the Lord should be thus reconciling the world to Himself—what an infinite and inconceivable free grace of God is this?

REASON 6. They who live in the world shall generally come in to God, and indeed be actually reconciled in time. Though the world for the present is not so generally reconciled to God, yet

the Lord has His time when the Jews shall be called, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and we shall see further reason for the generality of this expression.

God has promised that Christ shall possess the utmost parts of the earth, and that the heirs of the promise shall inherit the world. I understand it literally. Romans 4:13 states that God made a promise to Abraham, and to his seed, that he should be the heir of the world. And this promise is yet to be fulfilled in a literal sense. In some spiritual sense the saints may be said to be heirs of the world. For indeed the right especially belongs to them. I do not deny that ungodly men have right by gift, as He gives the earth to the children of men—not by inheritance, as the saints have, but as servants have a right to their meat and drink and what is given them. But as children have a right by inheritance, so the saints have a right to this world as well as to heaven; and there is a time coming when they will possess their inheritance. Then the text will be true literally.

And thus you have the reasons of this phrase, and this may suffice for the opening of the point, that it is the world that God was reconciling Himself to.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Use 1: Seeing God Has Excepted None from Mercy, Let None Except Themselves

*W*e now turn to application, and that very briefly in only two particulars:

First, seeing God propounds reconciliation thus in such general and broad terms to the world, then, if God has not excepted any, let none except themselves. Are you a man who lives here in the world? There needs to be no further qualification for the tender of grace, for the offer of the gospel to you, but this: you live in the world. God does not call for such qualifications as these: that they must be such and such men, of such and such ranks and dignities, men of such parts, that they must be such as have not committed such and such sins, or that they must be first terrified and thus humbled. No, we have commission to preach the gospel to everyone who has no other qualification than that he lives in the world. Indeed, if you were gone out of the world, although you should have but one sinful thought to answer for, we could not preach the gospel to you. If it were possible for an angel to come to your soul after it is gone

out of this world, yet it could not, nor dare not, preach the gospel to you. But while you are in this world, we are appointed to preach the gospel to you, and to hold forth the tender of grace and mercy to you.

There is no counsel of God revealed either to angels or men that has excepted anyone of the greatest congregation of people from reconciliation with God. And you who hear or read what I now say, you may bless God that you are one such person. You may bless God when you hear and read that there is no counsel of God against you made known, either to angels or men, whereby you are excepted from reconciliation. But every particular one, for all we know, in any congregation may be reconciled to God and have eternal life. Oh, only take heed of abusing this grace of God! See that you make good use of it.

This is that which we are bound to tell you, and, in the name of God, we declare it to you. God propounds this gospel to us in these broad terms so that you may be left utterly without excuse if you perish. None of you, if you perish, can say, "I was so vile a sinner that I was afraid I should never be received by God, though I humbled myself and came to Him," for God will answer you, "Were you such a vile sinner? Did not I reveal My gospel in such general terms that none might exclude himself? Did not I say, 'I was reconciling Myself to the world'? And did I make any exception of you in particular? You ought to have come in among the rest. You ought to have ventured your soul on the offer of the freeness of My grace."

Indeed, there can be no other encouragement but this for the first work. Whosoever believes at any time is not to believe because of any qualification of his which gives him a right to it, but on these terms, that God has reconciled the world to Himself, and that He has offered the promise of grace generally,

and that He has said, "Whosoever will may come in and believe. Whosoever is thirsty may come."

And that word of His is my warrant. The indefinite promise that God has made is a sufficient encouragement, and, if I can rest my soul on this, it is that which gives me right and interest in the grace of God. And whosoever has been saved has been saved on these terms. The first work has been a kind of venturing work. They have ventured their souls on this grace of God thus generally and indefinitely offered, and you should retire into your closets and do so too.

You whose consciences condemn you of great and notorious sins, when you hear of this general offer, though you do not know whether you are elect or not, trouble not yourselves with such thoughts, but venture to cast your souls on this free grace of God in Christ with resolution to give yourselves up to the service of God for the time to come. And though you have not ability in yourselves, yet who knows but on such a work as this God's Spirit may come, even at that instant, to enable you to do it. This is that which God requires, and if God persuades your heart to this, it is a good sign that mercy is intended to you. If, every time God makes an offer and tender of the gospel to you, it stirs up your heart to conclude, "Well, I will venture my soul on this offer. God has not excepted me, why then should I except myself? God has not cast me away, so why should I make myself a castaway?" Then do not despair, but believe.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Use 2: Be Reconciled to God Now

*S*econd, hence it concerns us all to look about us while we live in this world, that there may be some work of God on our hearts while we are here, that while we live in this world we may be reconciled to Him. For if the thread of our life is once cut asunder, and we are no longer in this world but go out of it without being reconciled to God, we are undone creatures forever. We say of men when they are dying, "Alas, such a one is now no man for this world." Well, they need, then, to look to themselves that the work of reconciliation is done before, for when you are no longer in this world then you are gone forever. Oh, then, apply yourself to this work while you have time, and take hold of the means and opportunities which God affords to you while you are a man of this world; lose them not. And know that it is a great mercy of God to you to continue to let you live in this world, because here you are under the power of grace. You are under that general grace of God that is indefinitely tendered to every man, under that grace which has fallen on as great sinners as you are. And therefore, so long as there is life there is hope.

This point I have often made use of to show that this time of our lives is the time of grace and salvation. And it follows naturally and fully from the expression in the text; therefore I shall leave it. Only let me tell you that though God expressed this grace of reconciliation here to the world, yet if ever you are actually reconciled to God, before you leave the world God will make you to be a man no more of this world. And though you are in the world, yet you shall not be of the world, but *above* the world. Therefore, you find that, when Christ speaks of those whom His Father had given to Him and who had believed on Him, He says, "I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil" (John 17:14–15).

It is true that when men believe on Christ they are in the world, and Christ does not pray that God should take them out of the world, but that He should preserve them in the world. It should teach us, by the way, to be content to live in the world, though it is a dangerous and evil world; for it was as dangerous and as evil a world wherein the disciples and Christ lived. They were in danger of death for the profession of religion, and yet, though Christ loved His disciples, He would not pray they should be taken out of the world.

You have a great many discontented people who will pray that God would take them out of the world, "No," says Christ, "keep them in this world." And then He says, "They are not of the world." Indeed, God is reconciling Himself to the world, that is, to those who are in the world, but who, since He is reconciled to them, are no longer men of the world, though they are in the world. Therefore, if you are one whom God the Father and the Son have agreed on from all eternity to be

reconciled to in time, you shall be brought to be one not of the world, even while you live in the world.

Therefore, you who are not only in the world, but are worldly men, and mind only the things of the world, know that the work of reconciliation is not done with your souls. What God has done concerning you in His eternal purpose from all eternity we know not, but, as the work is not yet done on your soul, you are not reconciled to God, that is, you are not brought to such a disposition in your own heart as to be at peace with God. And if ever you shall have any peace at all, know that it must be done here in this world; the work of reconciliation must be done here. So much for the point that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

“Not Imputing Their Trespases” Opened

Now follow the two other expressions: “not imputing their trespases against them,” and “has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” The first I may cover in a few words. “Not imputing their trespases” means not reckoning, not setting their sins on their own score; so the word intends. When a man is in debt, we say there is so much standing on his head, so much on his score. Now, when God is said not to impute your trespases, the meaning is that your debt comes to be canceled and to be reckoned as the debt of another man. He sets your sins no longer on your score, but on the score of Christ. This is the happiness of believers: those sins of theirs that stood on their score are now taken off and set on the score of Christ. This is a blessed doctrine, and we cannot speak of this without a trembling of heart, because we know how subject men are to abuse it. But the children must have the bread given to them, though it tends to the ruin and destruction of others.

You who are sinners and go on in sin, though you see it not, you add every day to the score like some gallants who come into an inn or a tavern and there call for wine and good cheer. They

never think that one is—all the while they are eating, drinking, and being merry—behind the door with a piece of chalk scoring up all, and at last will call for payment of it. Every sin we commit is upon the score, and there is a time when God will call for payment.

You will say, “How is it then that God says, ‘Their sins shall not be imputed?’”

Why, it is because Christ comes, and all that is on our score is taken off, and set upon His; yet the score must be paid. So this phrase notes that the salvation of man is not from such a free pardon as if a man who is in debt should have his creditor come and say, “I will erase the score. I will wipe off all and pardon all.” No, but the way of the salvation of man is thus: here is a debt, and paid it must be. But Christ the surety comes and pays for some, while others are cast into the prison of hell where they must lie until they have paid the uttermost farthing; for the debt must be paid.

And here is the reason for the difference between believers and others. Those who are damned, all the time they live, run up the score, and at last God comes and reckons with them for all. And then, alas, they have nothing to pay. So, says God to the devil, “Take him, jailer.” Death is God’s serjeant to arrest him, the devil is his jailer, and they take him to prison. And there he must lie until he has paid the uttermost farthing.

But as for believers who have run up the score—adding so much in the days of their youth when they were apprentices; so much since they were married—yes, but when divine justice is ready to seize and arrest them, Christ comes in and says, “Let the man be freed. I will pay the score for him.” Suppose a spendthrift should run up the score, and, when he is arrested and ready to go to the jail, there comes a friend who says, “Deliver him, and I will pay the debt.” This is what Christ does. So that

when our sins are forgiven, they are forgiven in such a way that it costs much; our deliverance costs much. And this I note from the phrase in the original text, for it means literally “not reckoning, or accounting it on the score.” I have in many sermons opened the doctrine of the pardon of sin [See Burroughs, *Gospel Remission*, published by Soli Deo Gloria]. Therefore I will not intend to expand on that. I will only give some few notes from hence that are most proper to the text.

NOTE 1. There may be sin in the soul, and yet it is not imputed. Therefore, there may be a righteousness imputed which is not our own; there is the same ground of both.

Many of our adversaries cry out against imputation of righteousness. Say they, “How can that which is none of our righteousness be made ours?” But so it is if we believe; the righteousness of Christ which is none of ours is made ours.

“How can that be?” say they.

It can, just as that which is our sin shall not be made our sin. If that which is our own shall not be imputed, then that which is not our own may be imputed likewise.

NOTE 2. Second (which is a note of marvelous comfort), there may be a reconciliation with God even while there remains much sin in the soul. It does not say, “Reconciling the world to Himself, taking away their sins, purging out all their sins,” as if there could be no reconciliation until all their sins were taken away, but “He was reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing”; that is the phrase. It is as if He had said, “Oh, you sinners, so long as you live in the world you will have sin! And therefore do not think that God is not reconciled to you, or that you are not reconciled to God. No, though sin remains in your hearts, yet God may be reconciled to you, not imputing your sins.”

This should be an argument to you to labor to purge out sin as much as you can, seeing the grace of God is such that, though sin remains in you, yet God is still reconciling you to Himself. It is not so much to think that God should be reconciled to the angels in heaven who have no sin in them. Oh, but for God to be reconciled to His saints on earth who have so much sin in them, that is much! There are many of the people of God who cannot distinguish between sin not being imputed and sin being in them. They think that because they have much sin in them the Lord will not be reconciled to them. But know that, though sin is in you, yet there may be no imputation of sin to you; and therefore learn to distinguish between sin being in you and sin not being imputed to you.

And this should be of use to us likewise to teach us to be willing to be reconciled to others, notwithstanding that there are many weaknesses in them, and even though they still continue to offend us. Be reconciled to your servants; be reconciled to your children and to your neighbors. Do not say, “I could be reconciled to them if I saw them changed indeed.” What do you mean by that? Do you mean if you could see no more weakness in them, or if there were never anything in them more that offends you; will you wait that long? God does not wait so long for you before He brings you to heaven and perfects you. He does not stop His reconciliation with you until you come to heaven and are perfect. No, He is reconciled to you here, even here while you have a nature in you that bubbles out nothing but sin against Him. Notwithstanding the presence of sin in you, yet God can distinguish between the presence of sin in you and the imputation of it.

NOTE 3. We see here the basis of all our reconciliation: the non-imputation of our sins. It is no argument that God is reconciled to a man because He lets him prosper in the world, or

because he has been at sea and has gotten a great deal of riches in his voyage. Perhaps the man blesses himself and thinks: "Oh, now all is well between God and me, for He has given so much riches and blessed me in such a voyage!" Alas, you are mistaken if you think that this is an argument of reconciliation; no, the basis of reconciliation is non-imputation.

Have you an evidence to your soul that God has revealed Christ to you, and that in His Son He has not imputed your sin to you? And do you build your peace on that? Many build their peace on this: that their sins are not so great as others' are. What of that? If it is but one sin that you are guilty of, though it is of the least nature, yet if it is imputed to you it is enough to make your soul and God eternal enemies. Others there are whose sins were committed a great while ago, and are no longer troubled with them, and now they are quiet and at peace. But oh, let them know there is still the debt remaining on the score; it is not taken care of. As a man who may wait a long while before he calls for his debt may call for it when he pleases, and sooner or later will do it, so you have gotten yourself into a kind of peace and worn out the pricks of your conscience, yet know that as long as your sins are on the score and are not wiped off, God will call for payment sooner or later. Therefore, please not yourself in anything in the world, as the ground of your peace, but your being reconciled to God in Christ, God not imputing your sins to you.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

The Minister's Commission to Preach Reconciliation to the World

*W*e now pass on to the next thing, and that is the declaration of this doctrine of reconciliation with God in Christ in the last words of 2 Corinthians 5:19: “And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” God has committed it to us. I find the words in the original different from how they read in your English Bibles. The word “committed” is “and put into us.” So the words are, “put in this word of reconciliation.” So if you read it word for word according to the original text it is: “And He hath put into us the word of reconciliation.” But because this reading would seem to be harsh in our English phrase, therefore the translators have translated it: “And has committed to us.” But the original expresses it in this other manner to show what is needful for a minister of the gospel, that he should have the doctrine of reconciliation sink deep into his own heart first so that, when he comes to speak to the hearts of other men, he may speak from the heart and to the heart.

The word that comes from the heart (we say) goes to the

heart, and therefore it is of great use that one who is a minister of the gospel should have the word of reconciliation, the mysteries of the gospel, deeply rooted in his heart, so that when he comes to speak to the people he may speak not merely from his tongue and head, but from his heart experientially—that his heart may be in his ministry so that it may be more effectual to go to the heart of the people to whom he speaks. The apostle says, “But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me” (Galatians 1:15–16)). He does not say “to reveal His Son *to* me,” but “*in* me”; so the words are. So, indeed, it befits a minister of the gospel to be a profitable minister when Jesus Christ comes to be revealed *in* him. And so much for the expression “has committed unto us,” that is, “put in us the word of reconciliation.”

It is as if the apostle should say, “Whereas the Lord has been from all eternity plotting, as it were, the great work of reconciling the world unto Himself in that great mystery of godliness, doing it in Christ, and this is the work that above all things concerns the glory of God and the good of souls, and whereas the Lord has been pleased to appoint some select messengers to carry His name about the world, and to show the world what those glorious counsels of His will have been from all eternity concerning the children of men, this great doctrine of reconciling the world to Himself in Christ is the very business that we are sent about the world for, and are as the ambassadors of Christ, to come and in His name to treat with the world about reconciliation with God, about making their peace with God.”

So here you have the work of the ministers of the gospel, and what great things are committed to the ministers of the gospel. He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation,

that is, the work, so that from hence the point is this, according to the words of the text:

DOCTRINE. The ministry of reconciliation with God is committed to the ministers of God to preach to the world.

The ministers of God have a commission from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to preach the doctrine of reconciliation to the people, for here we have it in the very words that follow: "We are ambassadors of Christ, as if God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are likewise in the commission of God's ministers when they come to preach in the name of God, and that you have here: "Thou gavest Thy good spirit" (Nehemiah 9:20). It was the prophet who came to instruct them, but it was the Spirit of God in the prophet who instructed them, so that the ministers of God have their commission from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to come to the people and reveal the great counsels of God to them. They are sent by the whole Trinity to the people, and here is their commission; but the commission is more immediately from Christ (though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in it), because Christ is the great prophet of the church; and it is part of the prophetic office of Christ to have the great counsel of God His Father in the mystery of our reconciliation to be opened to the people.

Christ was first anointed, and then He does, as it were, anoint other officers to this great work. In Isaiah 61 you find the great Prophet is first anointed: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me." To what? "To preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken heart, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and

the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”

That is, in effect, the same as this ministry of reconciliation; it is but a broad expression of the ministry of reconciliation, and, as you see here, it is a prophecy of Christ. This Christ is appointed by God the Father and the Holy Spirit: “For the Spirit of God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed Me.” There is the Holy Spirit in it. God the Father appoints Him (He only may be said to be the appointer), and the Holy Spirit anoints Jesus Christ to be a preacher of the gospel. He being the prime and chief Prophet of the Church, He appoints others to exercise, as it were, some work of His prophetic office, that is, to preach the great doctrine of reconciliation. He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation, and this you shall see is the commission that Christ gives: “And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15).

This is the gospel, the doctrine of reconciliation by Christ. He does not give them a bare commission, but He joins His own power together to this commission, and tells them that His power goes along with them in it: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). What follows in verse 19? “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” What a commission is here! What a preamble to the commission is here! “I have received

all power both in heaven and in earth," He says, and then He tells them, "Go and teach all nations." It is as if Christ should say, "You are going about the greatest work in which ever any creature has been employed in this world," for so it certainly is. The ministry of reconciliation is, next to the work of redemption that Christ was employed about, the greatest work that any creature in this world was employed about, whatsoever the world thinks of it. No angel in heaven was ever employed about a greater work than this, and therefore, since it is of so great consequence, Christ gives this preface: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore."

It is as if Christ should say, "Be it known to you now that the power that is given to Me by the Father shall go along with you, and therefore be encouraged."

But they might well have said, "Who is sufficient for these great things?"

"But be not discouraged," says Christ. "My power shall go along with you to assist you, to comfort you, to encourage you. It shall go along with you to make your ministry profitable to those who belong to My election. It shall go along with you to defend you from all adversaries. The world will be enraged against you when you come to preach this doctrine, but My power shall go along with you to defend you from them all, to strengthen you against all opposition in the world, and to enable you to suffer whatsoever shall be brought on you."

And further, Christ says, "I am with you *always*, even to the end of the world." One would have thought that it would have been sufficient that Christ should have said, "I am with you to the end of the world." But there is something more in this: "I am with you *always*, even to the end of the world." That is, "I will not be only with you, so as not wholly to leave you, but there shall be not one moment of time to the end of the

world but in it I will be with you. I will not only overshadow you and send My presence with you, but every moment, every day, every sermon you preach, I will be with you to the end of the world." Those people died more than 1,500 years ago, and yet Christ says He will be with them to the end of the world, that is, with those who would succeed them in the ministry of reconciliation.

This is the commission, and when they come to any house they are to begin thus: "Peace be to you," that is, the peace of God in Christ. Now this doctrine of reconciliation is that which must be understood when preaching the gospel. We can read but very little of it, scarcely one letter in all the book of nature. We cannot come to understand it by any knowledge of our own, but it must be taught to us. But this much we can understand from nature: God's continuing to uphold the world, His shining on the just as well as on the unjust, and His abundance of mercy here declare with a loud voice that there is some possibility for men to be reconciled to God, that there is mercy for mankind. There seems to be a loud voice in the goodness of God in nature to call out to the ears of all the world that man is in a better condition than the devils, for certainly, if God had no intention to do good to mankind, He would not continue so many mercies as He does.

Now this cannot show us what Christ is, but it may show us that God has a way of mercy for the children of men, and I think, in part, that may be meant by the text we have in Romans. The apostle says concerning the gospel: "But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the world" (Romans 10:18). Have they not heard of the gospel that is here spoken of? Has not Israel heard the gospel? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

And if you compare this text with Psalm 19, we may have cause to wonder at the quotation of it. There it is a little different, as in verse 4, which says, "Their line (that is, the great character of the grace of God that is written in the book of nature, as it were, in a line) is gone out throughout the earth." It has a kind of sound in it, or at least we may see it written. Hence you see in Psalm 19:1 that it is clearly spoken concerning the works of God in the sun and in the heavens, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork."

Nature has a loud voice to call us to God by repentance. Now there can be no calling us to repentance but it is a voice of the gospel, and the apostle says plainly that "the patience of God calls us to repentance" (Romans 2:4). Whatsoever leads to repentance has something of the gospel in it, patience and goodness. Though we never come to hear of the ministry of the gospel, yet it is that which calls us to repentance. And it is clear in that it is thus spoken of nature: the loud voice of nature in Psalm 19 is applied to the gospel in Romans 10, and unless you understand it so we cannot tell you that the sound of the gospel has gone to the utmost parts of the earth. We cannot understand how in the apostle's time the gospel went to the uttermost parts of the world, for there are many places that have not been found yet; but this kind of sound of the gospel goes throughout the earth, that by the voice of nature men ought to come to know that surely there is some way for God to be pacified towards sinful men. Though they cannot tell what way, surely there is some way, and many of the Jews knew no other way but this: they knew there was a Messiah to come, but what He was or who He was they knew very little of.

Now the devils have no such work of God towards them, nor such bounty and patience and goodness towards them whereby they can conclude that God has any thoughts to be reconciled

to them. Though it is true that they are not yet fully under the torment that they shall be, yet they are under so much torment as they are said to be reserved to the great day in chains of darkness. In contrast, wicked and ungodly men are preserved by the bounty and patience of God, and the cords of God's bounty and mercy are towards them; therefore they are not reserved in chains of darkness as the devil and damned are.

So by the bounty of God in nature we may conclude that surely God has some way to show mercy to mankind. But we can never have any thoughts by any works of God in nature that God should send the second person of the Trinity to take man's nature on Him, to die, to suffer for man's sin, to tender up satisfaction to divine justice, and then that all must be brought into this covenant; nor that He must be the Head of the second covenant, and they must be made members of His body. Now nature has no such ministry as this, and therefore in Ephesians, says the apostle (stating what his ministry was): "Unto me who am the least of all saints is the grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). When he says that they are unsearchable, he is speaking of the riches of Christ: as they are of Christ they are unsearchable. The word there is "the riches that are without footsteps." There are no footsteps of the riches of Christ in nature, if we speak of the doctrine of Christ the Mediator as it is indeed in the gospel; though there is some kind of sound in nature indicating that it is sure that God has some kind of way to be reconciled. But now the sound of the gospel is committed to ministers to preach, and therefore the apostle says that "in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Mark it, "the world by wisdom knew not God." Certainly the world knew there was a God,

and that He was infinite in power and goodness; but the text says, "They knew not God," that is, they knew not God savingly in Christ. They might know that God had some kind of way to show mercy to sinners, but what way they knew not, and by wisdom—that is, by all the wisdom that was revealed by God in nature, and by all the wisdom they received from God—they knew not God.

True, there is an abundance of the wisdom of God in nature. Its acts are no other than the several beams of God's wisdom shining in nature, and the knowledge of these acts is no other than the several beams of God's wisdom shining into men's understandings. Take all of them, and by these alone man could not know God in a saving way. But by the foolishness of preaching, that is, by the preaching that the men of this world account foolishness, the Lord is pleased to save those who believe. So it is evident that the ministry of reconciliation is committed to the preachers of the gospel.

CHAPTER FORTY

Why God Chose Men Rather than Angels to Dispense the Mystery of Reconciliation

Now it is to be inquired into why God would choose men to be the dispensers of the great mystery of reconciliation rather than the angels. God has not committed to them this word of reconciliation (though it is true that the angels go about, and sometimes bear witness to the gospel, as you may read afterwards). But they are not chosen by way of office to the ministry of the gospel. God has not chosen angels in an ordinary way to come and dispense those great and glorious things to the children of men.

OBJECTION. You will say, "Would it not have been better if God had chosen the angels to come and preach Jesus Christ than men? For they are poor, weak creatures like ourselves, and now, when they come to stand up and preach Jesus Christ, the great things about reconciling men to God, should we think that they know more than we ourselves?"

ANSWER. You must not think that there is no good to be done until someone comes and tells you something you never heard of. Rather, you must know that it is by virtue of the ordinance of Christ, that He has appointed a minister of the gospel to come and in such a way to preach. Though the instruments may be yourselves, and perhaps may not have a deeper understanding than some of you, yet you are to look on it beyond the matter that he speaks. You are to look on it as the ordinance of Christ, and so to expect and look at all means whatsoever.

But now the great standing ordinance in the church of God is the ministry of the gospel; it is this that is committed to us to preach, and this, therefore, is to be looked on as the power of God to salvation in those whom God intends salvation to. God has not chosen the angels, but men, because we are not so capable of conversing with angels as with men. We are not able to stand before them. When an angel has sometimes appeared to a gracious servant of God, that servant has not been able to bear the glory of it, but has fallen down. When the angels came in Luke 2 and said, "Glory to God on high," they struck the shepherds with amazement.

In the second place, the ministry of angels could not be so effectual. Angels do not fully understand the windings and turnings of the hearts of men as men do; a man is more conscious of the turnings and windings of his own heart than any angel can be. He may know his own heart more than angels can, and by knowing his own heart he may be able to speak more suitably. We do not read in the Word that angels know the thoughts of the heart of men any further than is somehow expressed to them, nor do the devils. It is the property of God to be the Searcher of the heart; but a man may search his own heart in a great measure further than the angels, and so men

better speak to the hearts of others. So God, in wisdom, rather commits the ministry of reconciliation to men than angels.

But a third reason is this, and it is a special one: that the power of God may more appear in the conversion of souls to Jesus Christ. And in this one thing the power of God appears a great deal more than in making heaven and earth.

First, the doctrine of reconciliation is the most high, supernatural thing that is in the world; it is above the reach of a creature.

Second, it is that which beats down man's nature as much as can be. A few poor fishermen at first, to whom was committed the word of reconciliation, and a few of the apostles who were in a poor, mean, contemptible condition, who sometimes scarcely had rags to hang upon them, were whipped up and down and put in the stocks as if they had been the vilest rogues that had been in all the world. Yet, that God should subdue so many nations on the face of the earth, and in time should bring the whole world in general to receive this doctrine by such poor and weak means, oh, the infinite power and glory of God that appear! In this God uses weak means to show the greatness of His power, and for that you have a clear text in 2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels," that is, the ministry of reconciliation. Oh, it is a treasure indeed in earthen vessels. The word is, in the Greek, "in vessels of shells." There were some rich shells that had on the outside a plain shell, so that when you came to the seashore they looked as if they were not worth a farthing. But within the shell there was a precious pearl that was worth many thousands of pounds. "So," says he, "we have this treasure in a shell, that is, in a poor, weak, frail vessel (man); in a contemptible vessel we have this pearl." And why so? The apostle gives the reason: "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." There is a mighty power

of God that goes together with the ministry of reconciliation. Whosoever any soul is brought home to be reconciled to God, certainly there goes a mighty power, yes, there goes a hyperbolic power together with it.

OBJECTION. But how will it appear that there is such a mighty power of God that goes with the ministry of reconciliation?

ANSWER. It appears in that there are such mighty things done by such poor, weak, and contemptible means that men should be willing to part with anything in the world, yes, their very lives, and bear the greatest torments of the most cruel tyrants for the witness of this truth. Now this appears to be the mighty power of God, and this seems to be a secret answer to any objection in 2 Corinthians 3. Is it so that the ministers of the gospel are far more glorious than the ministers of the law? What is the reason that the ministers of the gospel are in such a mean condition, so much meaner than the ministers of the law? There was a high priest, and he had glorious robes, and precious stones on his breast and shoulders. We have no such things. Here is a company of poor fishermen, weak, mean men that the world regards not. Surely the ministers of the law were more glorious than these ministers of the gospel. "No," says the apostle to all this, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power of God might appear, and not of man, and we are willing that the power of God may appear more, that the glory of God may shine bright; we are willing to be earthen vessels."

Another reason why God commits this ministry to poor men rather than to angels may be this: to be a stumbling block to wicked and ungodly men whose hearts are opposed to the glorious gospel. Christ preached in parables that "in seeing they might not see, and in hearing they might not understand." It is a just judgment of God against the Pharisees, and others whose

hearts were wicked and unclean and opposed to Christ, that the glorious things of the gospel might be hidden under those parables. So I do not question that the means of the ministry of the gospel (which the world counts foolishness), and the mean condition of the professors of the gospel, God intends as a stumbling block to ungodly men who should perish eternally because their hearts are wicked and perverse. "I hate them," says God, "therefore will I hide this rich treasure from them. But those I love, I will open the inside unto them; but others shall have nothing but the outside, they shall only have the visible part."

But now there are others whom God intends to save. And they come, and the Lord (together with their outward ministry) speaks to their hearts and opens the inward treasure to them. And then they see the glory of it and admire it; and they come to taste the sweet promises of the gospel. They adore God in receiving such things as these are. So God achieves His ends this way, but (in His just judgment) hides His gospel from some and reveals it to others. "Therefore," says the apostle, "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Corinthians 4:3). The ministry of the gospel is hidden to some, but it is to those who are lost. He hides it from them by this outward means. Thus you see why God commits the ministry of reconciliation unto men rather than angels.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Why God Will Not Himself Directly Dispense this Gospel Reconciliation

But further, it may be said, “Why will not God directly Himself preach this doctrine of the gospel, the mystery of reconciliation? We see many infirmities in men. Men are ready enough to stumble at all infirmities of the ministers of the gospel (which, by the way, should teach ministers of the gospel to have a care how they walk), but because there are so many things to be held against men we think that if God Himself preached the gospel from heaven men would regard it more.”

No, but God will not do so. Though God will assist the ministry to make it effectual in the hearts of those who shall be saved, yet He will not speak Himself from heaven. He will speak to men by men like themselves, and let men hear or not (though men think that if God should speak Himself they would hear Him), yet if they hear not men they would not hear God. God spoke Himself from heaven in delivering the law, but men did not keep the law. Now God will rather speak by men,

because He delights to make use of every creature according to the capacity of it.

The Lord takes a wonderful delight in the use of all means that are suitable to a creature. Therefore you shall find that though God began to speak from heaven to Saul, whom He converted (who afterwards was called Paul), and Christ spoke at first from heaven. He would not do the whole work Himself immediately, but before the work should be accomplished there should be means used. In Acts 9:4 Christ spoke from heaven, but I beseech you to observe what Christ speaks from heaven. He does not preach the gospel; it is only the word of conviction, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" This was enough to strike Saul with astonishment so that he fell on the earth and said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" But mark, what answer is given him? "Go into the city and it shall be told thee." It is as if He had said, "You must not think, though I begin to speak from heaven to you, but that you must be content to set upon means," and so He did with Saul. "He arose from the earth" (verse 8). God made him stay a good while before He would tell him what he should do. He was three days and nights and ate nothing, and was praying all the while to the Lord, and then in verse 10, the Lord said to Ananias (a minister of His), "Go to such a place, and there thou shalt open to Saul My mercy, this doctrine of reconciliation." It is true, I began to act upon Him, but I will not go on in the work; you shall do it, and he shall attend on your ministry to let him know what My mercy in Christ to his soul is, and I will bless your ministry to his soul."

And thus you see how God stands on making use of means. I have no question that it is something like God's dealing with many of you. God at first begins Himself, and strikes some terror into your hearts. When a man is going about his business, and some sudden thought pierces his heart: "Lord, where am

I? What if I should now die? How can I answer for such and such things before God?" And thus, perhaps, he comes to be troubled in his conscience by some immediate work of God. But God will not go on in this work immediately, but instead sends him to the ministers of His Word, and there He shows him what he must do concerning his good.

I will give you a notable text to show you how God stands on means. In Acts 10:2, there was a man who had some kind of the fear of God, but understood little of Christ. He was a soldier, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. He had a great many soldiers who were wicked, but yet he had some who were godly. But though he was in that place, he was a devout man and full of prayer (as it is commendable for soldiers to be much in prayer), because, carrying his life in his hands, he had need to carry grace in his heart. And then in verse 3 (it is a very observable Scripture), first God accepted his prayers and appeared in a vision to him, and sent an angel to him, and told him that his prayers were accepted well; and God would reveal so much of Christ to him which he was very ignorant of.

You will say, "Seeing God sent an angel to him, why did not God reveal Christ by the angel?"

No, He would not. He sent an angel to Cornelius to this end, to bid him send for Peter who was a minister of the gospel. This would be the message of the angels, to tell him that God regarded his prayers and alms. Aye, but it is as if the angel should say, "God has other things to tell you; but I have no commission to tell them to you; my commission is to tell you that you should send for a minister." So he sent for Peter, and Peter came and preached Christ to him, as you may see in verse 34.

So you may see that God usually works on men by means, and, surely, herein God will honor human nature in taking it on Himself. And as for God's honoring of the minister of His

Word, note (which is likewise very observable) that when Christ Himself preached on the earth, we never read that His preaching was so effectual to convert as many souls as the ministers of the gospel did. Peter, when he came to preach the gospel, converted three thousand souls at one sermon; you never read that Christ converted so many at a sermon. Christ Himself preaching the gospel directly never converted as many as Peter did. The reason is to show that we must not expect so much the immediate preaching of God to us as God and Christ preaching to us by the ministry of man; that is the meaning of it.

So now you have had the point opened to you that God commits to us the ministry of reconciliation. I shall endeavor to apply it.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Use 1: The Sending of the Ministers of the Gospel Is to Be Accounted a Glorious Blessing

*F*irst, if the great work of the ministers who are sent among you is to dispense the ministry of reconciliation to you, oh, then, certainly the sending of any of the ministers of the gospel among you ought to be accounted a glorious and wonderful blessing of God on you at any time! Why? What is their errand? They came to treat with your souls about reconciliation with God; and God has appointed this the great means of bringing souls to Himself, to be reconciled to Himself, and therefore it is one of the greatest blessings in the world to have the ministry of the gospel in any congregation. “Blessed be your eyes,” says Christ, “that you see such things” (Luke 10:23), and your ears that you hear such things, that God has disposed you to live in those times wherein you have the mighty things of the ministry of the gospel shown to you.

It is a good argument that God has many souls to be reconciled to Himself when He sends the ministers of the gospel to a place; and therefore, when Paul was going from place to

place, God appeared to him in the night and bid him be of good courage: "I have many souls in this city." When God, in a special manner, sends the preaching of the gospel to a place, let them bless God from their souls and take it as an argument that God has many souls in that place whom He intends to be reconciled to. For the ministry of the gospel is the ministry of reconciliation. It is the fruit of the prayer of Jesus Christ, and for that compare Isaiah 49:8 with 2 Corinthians 6:2 and it will be clear. Paul quoted Isaiah 49:8 there to show that his own preaching was the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Now it is clear that Isaiah 49 is a prophecy of Christ's praying to God the Father for those who belonged to His election, that in due time they might have the doctrine of reconciliation opened to them. Now, says God, "I have heard you in an acceptable time." And Paul said, "Now is the acceptable time." So that any time you come to hear a sermon, and hear the doctrine of reconciliation opened to you, you should think: "This day have I had the fruit of the prayer of Jesus Christ for this congregation, and, for my part in particular, Christ was praying to His Father for this long before I was born. And now do I come to have the fruit of the prayer of Jesus Christ, this very sound of the gospel in my ears this morning. It is no other but the fruit of the prayer of Jesus Christ to God the Father, long before I had a being and the world was."

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Use 2: The Great Honor of Ministers Who Are Faithful

*H*ence appears the great honor of the ministers of the gospel in their ministry. We will not attribute this honor to our persons, but to our work. Certainly, if they are committed to the ministry of reconciliation, they are sent about the most honorable business that ever was in the world: to dispense to the children of men the great mystery of salvation by Jesus Christ. So if a minister be faithful in it, it may be said of anyone whom God uses in this: “Happy that ever he was born, and blessed be the womb that bore him and the paps that gave him suck,” if he is faithful in his work; for he is employed about the greatest business in the world. Never did God employ angels in a work of greater consequence, and in a work wherein they are more honored. They are called in Scripture “angels of the churches,” for indeed their work is evangelical. And when Paul speaks of them he says, “Therefore let a man account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Brethren, we could be willing for our persons to be never so contemptible before you, if the contemptibleness of our

persons might further the glory of our work; but we know ordinarily that the contempt of persons hinders the honor of the work, and therefore, says the apostle, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." We are appointed stewards of the mysteries of God. We are stewards to deal out to you the mysteries of life and salvation, like Joseph, who was accounted highly of when he dealt out the corn in Egypt.

Now this work of reconciliation is that which the angels pry into. The angels learn instruction from this mystery of reconciliation; it not only behoves the greatest men in the world to attend upon it, but the angels themselves honor it and learn from it. I will give you a text for this, because it may seem to be hard to you: "To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10)—that is, that not only men, but the very angels in heaven might come to understand further the wisdom of God in Christ, and make it known to the church. Certainly, if the angels come to know further by the church, then specifically at our church meetings when we are together, and when there is the dispensation of the ministry of the gospel among the saints, and when the church is exercising its ordinances, then they come to know the manifold wisdom of God. However, some think it is foolishness, yet God said, "It is the manifold wisdom of God and the angels think so too." Certainly, there is no place so full of sinners as of angels hearing. Therefore, you may well come to hear, for the angels come to hear, and therefore the apostle says to women that they should behave themselves well because of the angels. And the Scripture tells us that the angels pry into this mystery of the gospel.

Ministers need not seek honor for themselves in any way but by their faithful administration of the gospel, and therefore,

in the primitive times, the ministers of the gospel were mightily honored by the people. Let a soul come to understand what it is to have peace with God through Jesus Christ, through any minister's ministry, and that soul will honor that ministry enough. He need not call for any honor and respect from that poor soul. It is said that in the former times there were wooden chalices and golden ministers, but afterwards there were golden cups and wooden ministers. It was a great deal more honor to the church when there were golden ministers, but afterwards, when there were golden cups and ministers were gallants, and had great incomes, may they not well be called "wooden" in respect of their opening the mysteries of salvation to the people?

It is common now to preach morality (and these are good things to be preached on), but where is the great point of reconciliation? The great point that all ministers ought to aim at is the great point of reconciliation, and that is to be preached, and it is their commission to preach that especially. Oh, how is it to be received and accepted! To us is committed the ministry of reconciliation. What is it? It is such a ministry as is of no less consequence than your reconciliation with God. Oh, how gladly should you take in this ministry! For they come about a work that is worthy of all acceptance, as the apostle says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

This is the sum of the ministry of reconciliation. When we come to bring this to you, we do not expect all acceptance, that everyone should open their hearts and hands to receive this work of reconciliation to you. We read that when Noah was tossed up and down the sea, after many days he put forth a dove, and she brought in an olive branch. Now this you know is an emblem of peace. Noah opened the window of the ark and took in the dove with the olive branch, and all those who come

to preach the gospel to you come with the olive branch in their mouths. The truth is, you are, as it were, upon the sea floating up and down. And we come to you with an olive branch in our mouths like Noah's dove: "Oh, then, open your windows and receive it," says the prophet.

"How beautiful are the feet of them that bring good tidings of peace" (Romans 10:15); their very feet should be beautiful unto you. It is so prophesied among the prophets, and it is made use of in the New Testament. And if you find your hearts opened and accepting it, and rejoice and bless God for it, then you fulfill that prophecy; and then the feet of those messengers are beautiful in your eyes. That is the work that you should come for when you come to hear a sermon. You should think: "This day I am coming to hear something of the work of reconciliation between God and my soul." And when people come to the Word to expect something concerning this peace with God, and when they hear any such thing, oh, then, they should bless the name of God!

Some come to the Word to hear some witty sentences and for discourse. But the main thing is that you should come to hear something about the reconciliation of God to your souls, and you should watch for such a word all the while the minister is opening the point. Your heart's desire should be: "Oh, but when will the word of peace be opened from God to my soul?"

And when you hear that word, oh, you should embrace it and receive it, as in Psalm 85:8: "I will hearken to what the Lord will say, for He will speak peace unto my soul." So should every poor, afflicted conscience say, "I will hearken this day when Christ will speak peace to my soul." May the Lord by His Word speak peace to you, and make that which we preach in opening the things of the gospel to be a powerful ministry of reconciliation to your souls.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

What a Wretched World That Cannot Bear Ministers of the Gospel

I have discussed what commission is given to the ministers of the gospel, and there is one great thing that I would have you observe that we take no notice of, and that is how the apostle again and again speaks of this, indicating that it is one of the greatest things that concerns the world that ever was. For he says, “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). He had not enough of that, but comes over it again: “That God was in Christ reconciling the world,” that God reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. God is reconciling Himself to the world in Jesus Christ. And verse 19, “And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation,” shows that it is a matter of great consequence. It is a great trust that is committed to the ministers of the gospel, the word of reconciliation, and there I showed you how you were therefore to entertain the ministers of the gospel. “Beautiful

should the feet be of those who bring glad tidings,” who come from God with this commission, this doctrine of reconciliation in their mouths, as Noah put forth his hand and took in the dove with the olive branch. So when a minister comes with this olive leaf in his mouth, the ministry of reconciliation, you must open your hearts and take it in.

A word or two more. This, you have heard at length, is the great work of the ministers of the gospel: to bring to you the doctrine of reconciliation. However foolish it may be before the world, yet it is the great ordinance whereby God will bring men to be reconciled to Himself, those whom He has a purpose to save. Here is now a work to treat with you about reconciling your souls to God, to open to you the counsels of God about bringing you to be at peace with Him.

But see what a wicked, wretched world this is that cannot bear the ministers of the gospel. This is all the work that they come to do, this errand unto people in the name of God, to make peace between God and their souls. Here is all their errand, and yet the world cannot bear this. If they came as the messengers of God’s wrath against them, then indeed the world might look sourly upon them and seek to avoid them; but when they come about no other errand than merely to treat with their souls about terms of peace, that the world should not receive them, but reject the gospel and despise it, and look on the ministers of the gospel as if they were great enemies, makes it a most wretched, wicked world. And there is nothing in the world that can aggravate the sins of men more than that they should reject the ministry of the gospel. Says God, “What? Shall I send the ministers of the gospel, My servants, to treat with these wretched creatures about making peace between Me and them, only to have them reject this?” Certainly God expects that wheresoever He sends the ministry of the gospel, generally

all people should admire the grace of God that is made known to them in Christ. They should all come in and cry to God, "Lord, what is it Thou dost require?" What? Has any messenger from heaven come? Now let us give up our hearts as a blank paper. Let God write in them whatever He pleases."

God does not expect that men should rise in a rage against the Word, and cast it off as that which brings trouble on them. How infinitely are men mistaken in this! To think that the preaching of the gospel is a trouble to the world, when it is the greatest happiness that can be in this world! And if you knew it, you would bless God for it, even with your faces groveling on the ground, that such a commission was given to your brethren to come from God to treat in His name about terms of reconciliation with you, the sons of men. What hurt do the ministers of the gospel do to men, that they should be so troubled with them so as to say, "The town or place is troubled, and we have not been at peace since there was such and such preaching!" Were there not infinite malice, there could never enter into the hearts of men such a conceit as this is.

OBJECTION. You speak about treatment of peace with God, but they are severe, and pronounce the judgments of God against us.

ANSWER. I appeal to you, how do we pronounce them? Do we pronounce them absolutely, or only in order to bringing souls to faith and repentance? What do we plead against? It is but against your sin which is your enemy, your deadly enemy that would certainly undo you, that would destroy you eternally. Ahab spoke of the prophet: "He never speaks good unto me," and yet, says Ahab, "have you found me, O mine enemy?" (1 Kings 21:20). He looked on the prophet as an enemy; so wicked, carnal hearts, though we come to open the mysteries of

the gospel to them, yet, when we show them upon what terms it runs, think we do not speak good to them.

Certainly (whatsoever your thoughts are), we are enemies to nothing but your sins that would destroy you; they are your enemies. And would anyone think it hard to have his deadly enemy to be roughly dealt with? All that we desire is to break the league between your souls and sin that there may be a league between God and your souls. Certainly love of sin and peace with God cannot stand together at the same time. It cannot be possible that there should be a league between sin and your souls.

Now which of the two do you think is the best, and who is your greatest friend? He who seeks to maintain a league with sin, or to break it that you may have a league between God and your souls? This is the intention of the gospel.

But you will say, "If this is the commission of the ministers, that God has put into them the word of reconciliation, why do they preach the law as much as they do? Why do they preach terror so much? For this is their commission: the word of reconciliation."

To that I answer, certainly he is a minister who knows not his commission, that preaches the law or any terror in any other way but in order to introduce this word of reconciliation, in any other way but to make you to understand this word of reconciliation. Though there is, in some respects, a great deal of difference between the law and the gospel, yet most people think it greater than it is, for the substance of the law is that which is implied, at least, in the gospel. When we say the word of reconciliation, it is impossible to open this to you without showing you something of how the law tends to reconciliation.

Why? Because we are enemies to God.

And how can we be enemies to God? By our sins.

QUESTION. How shall we know that sin brings enmity between God and us?

ANSWER. The law tells you, "Cursed be everyone that abides not in everything that is written in the book of the law to do it" (Deuteronomy 27:26). When we speak of reconciliation, there is implied enmity. I appeal to any of you to consider that God works with creatures according to the nature of creatures. He usually works, though above reason, yet in a rational way. He begins the work with those whom He intends to save. Therefore how can we, in a rational way, tell what reconciliation is until we understand what an enmity sin has made between God and our souls? It is impossible to understand the sweetness of peace with God until we understand the danger of our state. That is why we speak so much of the law. That is implied in the gospel, and it is so that the revealing of the gospel may come with more sweetness and fullness into your hearts. Oh, that you would but carry this along with you whenever you hear any of the ministers speak anything to you that has any terror in it. Do but persuade your souls of this: "Oh, but this is in order to secure my peace with God, in order to show what a blessed and sweet Savior Jesus Christ is."

OBJECTION. But others will say, "The word of peace is committed to you, so why do you speak of war then?"

ANSWER. To that I answer but a word. When we speak to you concerning war, what is our aim? What does it tend to? Only this: that you may be willing to venture yourselves, your lives and estates, to maintain among you this word of reconciliation. Here is the end; were it not for this, we would quickly hold our mouths. We would not hazard ourselves as we do to speak to you of such an argument. It is apparent, and any man whose

eyes are but half open may see, that if we are sluggish and cowardly now, then farewell to the word of reconciliation. The word of the gospel would be gone, and we must not allow that it be so among us and our posterity who will come after. Perhaps some of you know that since God has called a Parliament, and blessed it as He has done, never was the word of reconciliation opened so clearly as it has been. There has been some kind of preaching before with a mixture of impurities. But as for that clear way of reconciliation, your consciences may tell you that it has not been so clearly opened.

OBJECTION. But you will say, “The apostles had the word of reconciliation and preached it to the people; but they did not preach to the people that they should maintain it by force of arms. They taught people to suffer, to lay down their lives, and not to take the sword into their hands.”

ANSWER. This has been answered again and again, and it is a most vain objection of the people. This objection seems to be strengthened partly from the thing itself. They say that religion should not be maintained by the sword, and, they add, the example of the primitive times.

First, for religion, know that the maintenance that is now by the sword in this cause is not merely for religion, but it is for our civil right to have our religion. And this answer will address both objections.

In the early church, the apostles had no such right, nor did the Christians then. But now we live in such a country wherein we have a civil right to our religion as well as to our estates. We have not only a right to the profession of our religion (because God gives it to us out of His good will), but we have it too by virtue of a civil right, by virtue of the law of our commonwealth. Look what right you have to your houses, lands, and estates.

You have the same right to your practice of religion. This is the mercy of God towards England rather than to other countries. Now we take up arms to defend our civil right, and let it be what it will be, either to our estates or houses or religion or whatsoever it is, still it is a civil right. This is that which justifies this quarrel, and this is enough to stop the mouths of any in this point, and to answer that argument about the primitive times. But I will let this pass and come to the next verse.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Verse 20 Opened

*V*erse 20: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God.”

“Now we are ambassadors.” Mark what rise the holy apostle’s expression takes: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us this word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors.” His spirit seems to be much moved in this. In what? In God’s reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them? No, that “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.”

We have a great truth; we have a great charge. We are ambassadors not from any earthly great prince, but from Jesus Christ Himself. So in these words you have these several points of doctrine:

Doctrine 1. The ministers of the gospel are ambassadors of Christ.

Doctrine 2. What they do in this ambassadorship is as if God and Christ did it, as though God beseeched you by us; so “we pray you in Christ’s stead.”

Doctrine 3. The consideration of the excellency of their commission and ambassadorship makes them wonderfully careful to do what they are sent about, and very earnest in plying the work they are sent to do. “Now we are ambassadors, and as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled.”

Doctrine 4. God and Jesus Christ are exceedingly willing to be reconciled to sinners. And this fourth thing is indeed the principal thing in the text that is recorded. It is the very ground of all that is intended in the text, that God and Christ are exceedingly willing that sinners should come in to be reconciled to God, for They pray and beseech you.

Doctrine 5. The work of the ministry of the gospel is (by all the means they can) to labor to draw a people by entreating and beseeching them, and not to accept “nay” from the hearts of the people until they get them to come in to be reconciled unto God.

These are the five points of verse 20. I shall but briefly treat the first three, for indeed the two latter are the chief which I chose this text for, to show you the willingness of God that sinners should come in and be reconciled to Him, that the work of the ministry is to draw the hearts of the people. The other three I shall speak of but by way of preface to these.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

The Ministers of the Gospel Are Ambassadors of Christ

*T*he ministers of the gospel are the ambassadors of Christ. They are not ambassadors for Belial or antichrist, as many ministers have been, to plead the cause of antichrist, as if they were sent as legates from Rome to plead for superstitious vanities. We are not ambassadors for Belial, for sin or for wickedness; for many times you hear pleading against godliness and for wickedness. No, we are ambassadors for Christ; we are sent as ambassadors. This is something more than messengers; this is higher than to be a bare messenger. An ambassador is more than a steward: “Therefore let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and dispensers of the mysteries of salvation” (1 Corinthians 4:1). I only will show you a Scripture for that, and open it a little, and soon pass by this point.

We have often in Scripture this word “ambassador.” In Ephesians 6:20 you have it for the same purpose as it is here: “For which I am an ambassador,” and he is in bonds. He was not treated as an ambassador. You know that ambassadors, first, are such as are sent from princes and states to other princes and states. They are not private men. If any of you send a messenger

about a business, he is not said to be an ambassador; but one who comes from a prince or state, from another country is said to be an ambassador. So the minister of the gospel is not sent to deal between man and man, but between God and man in matters that concern the great God of heaven and earth; and he is sent from Him. Though they are appointed to it by men, yet their calling depends on God, on Christ.

Only here is the difference: when princes and states send their ambassadors, they send them to other princes and to other states. But God sends ambassadors to poor, wretched, sinful men; and herein He honors man, that He will send a messenger from Himself to them to be an ambassador. A prince does not send an ambassador to those in prison, whom he may execute when he pleases; he would rather send an executioner than an ambassador. So we might all have expected rather that an executioner should have been sent to us, but God is pleased, for His elect ones, to send an ambassador.

Second, ambassadors are not sent about every trivial business; but when an ambassador is sent he is about a public business, a state business of some great consequence. So when you hear that God sends His ambassadors to the world, you must know that it is about a great and a weighty business, about a state business; it is about that which concerns the very state of heaven, the God of heaven. It is that which concerns God more nearly than anything in this world; it concerns God next to His own being and to His Son, the nearest of anything that is outside God Himself; therefore we are called ambassadors.

Third, they are called “ambassadors” because they must look to this: that they do not the least thing but by commission. Just as it would cost an ambassador his life to go beyond his commission in anything, so the ministers of the gospel must keep close to the commission which they receive from Jesus Christ.

Fourth, when he goes to any place, an ambassador represents the person of the king himself from whom he came, and what wrong is done to him is done to the King's person, let the ambassadors be never so mean. So all the ministers of the gospel come to you in the name of the King of heaven, in the name of Jesus Christ, and there is a kind of a representation even of the person of Christ in them. And that will appear more fully when we come to the next point.

Fifth, an ambassador must give an account of His employment; he must (according as there is occasion) send to the country from whence he came of what business he has done. So the ministers of the gospel, coming as ambassadors, are ever and anon to send to heaven to give an account how they progress in their activity. And when they come to declare any message to the people they are to send to heaven to tell God whether it is received or rejected. And it is a very sad thing to any people when a minister of God shall have any just cause to send up to heaven this complaint: "Oh, Lord, Thou hast sent me with a blessed message of peace and reconciliation to this people, but, Lord, they reject it. They will rather have their lusts than all that glory of Thee in Jesus Christ. Heaven and eternal happiness is a light thing to them."

When a minister makes this complaint, do you not think it will be a hard thing to those who reject it? All faithful ministers do this. And if he is a faithful minister, he is solicitous about his ambassadorship. He looks whether it is entertained, and accordingly he gives notice to heaven not only weekly, but daily how it is entertained. And on that last day he must give a full account before the Lord and Jesus Christ.

Last, it is against the law of all nations to abuse an ambassador though he should come with never such a threatening message; you must treat the ambassador civilly. So it is against all laws of

religion to abuse a minister of the gospel, though he should come with a threatening message. But much more when he comes about an ambassadorship of peace are they to entertain him. It is against all sense and reason, and against all religion, and those people are most profane and reprobate to every good work, who shall abuse an ambassador coming from Jesus Christ to them.

Now a little by way of application.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Use: Welcome the Ambassador of Christ

*T*he ministers of the gospel are sent from the greatest prince in the world, and so they are to be looked upon. Now, then, if the feet of those who only bring glad tidings of peace should be beautiful; how much more the feet of the ambassador of peace! An ambassador is a separate category of person from one who brings good tidings. O my brethren, do not give cause for any complaint to be made, but rather give cause to those who come among you to send up a comfortable account to God: “Lord, Thou hast been pleased to send to such a place, to preach peace to such a people, and, Lord, how readily, yea, how greedily do those poor souls receive this ambassador! Lord! Never did any minister come into any place where this embassy was so entertained. Oh, they cry out for peace with Thee, and above all things in the world this is the desire of their souls. What they long after is that they might have peace with their God.”

Oh, this would be a joyful account if we could send up our account thus to God. Oh, let not any who come to you as the ambassador of Christ be like those in Isaiah 33:7: “Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall

weep bitterly.” It is spoken of, I confess, in another context, but we may apply it here. Truly there is a cause in many congregations that the ambassador of peace should weep, and that bitterly. The Lord keep you from giving any such occasion. Though it would be sad to their hearts, yet it would be more grievous to you. So much for the metaphor.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

The Second Doctrine Propounded in Chapter 45 Prosecuted

*W*hen a minister of the gospel comes, he is an ambassador. He comes in Christ's stead, and what he shall deliver (according to his commission) is to be looked at as if God and Christ preached to you.

For want of the right knowledge of this point so many sermons are lost. If people had but this text in their hearts, and looked on all the faithful ministers of the gospel as if God and Jesus Christ were present speaking, how much good would be done! When God intends good to any soul, He will cause it to look on the preaching of the gospel as the very voice of God and Jesus Christ to the soul. Though many a poor creature who, perhaps, has heard a thousand sermons looked upon preaching as simply what a man would say, at length, when the time of love came, he saw the authority and majesty of God Himself, and of Jesus Christ in the ministry. He felt God speaking to his heart, and then it prevailed. That is plain in the text: "As though God did beseech you by us." What we do is as if God did it. It is in Christ's stead.

Now this is not only true of the ministers of the gospel since Christ's time, but formerly what was done. Those who were sent by God to be His messengers were as if God and Christ did it. You have this proof of it: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also He went and preached to the spirits which are in prison" (1 Peter 3:18–19). That passage is vainly made use of by some to prove that Christ's soul descended into hell, to go and preach to the damned in hell; but certainly that is a vain conceit. If you observe the text, you shall find that this is the meaning of it (verse 20): "It was to those spirits which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God, waited in the days of Noah." This is speaking of those spirits who lived in the days of Noah, and of Noah's preaching to them. Now (says the text) they are in prison. Jesus Christ went and preached to the spirits that were disobedient in the times of Noah, who now are in prison. How does He go but by His Spirit, through His servant Noah? The preaching of Noah was the preaching of Christ.

It is as if he should say, "There is such a congregation so many a years ago that had a faithful minister. Christ was preaching so many years to those souls that are now in prison. Now, alas, they are gone; they are in hell. But there was a time that Christ was preaching to them."

I see I must not name many texts. I will give you one text or two more. "You did not receive it as the word of man" (1 Thessalonians 2:13); they looked beyond man. But how did they receive it? As from God, and therefore it effectually works on the heart when the people receive the Word as the Word of God. Mark also how the Galatians received the apostle. He says there, "And my temptation which was in my flesh you despised

not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God; even as Christ Jesus" (Galatians 4:14). Here he speaks in a way of commendation of the Galatians: "You received me as an angel of God, even as if you had received Christ Jesus."

Mark that the apostle was in a poor, mean condition in respect of his outward estate ("my temptation that was in my flesh"). He could have said, "In my outward man I was very low; and this might have been a temptation to you, to have caused you to have rejected me when I spoke."

Oh, this has been a temptation to many men because the preacher is an earthen vessel; though he has brought the right treasure of the gospel, yet this has been a temptation. But, says he, "It was not so with you, you received me; though I was a poor, weak, a mean man who scarcely had bread to eat, yet you received me as an angel of God, yes, beyond that, as Christ Jesus Himself." Yet you shall observe in the next words that it seems their hearts began to be drawn aside: "There was a time when I came first among you, when you were ready to have plucked out your very eyes for me" (verses 13, 15).

They had cried out, "Oh, this blessed doctrine of the gospel that we now hear!" But now where is the blessedness? It seems that some false teachers had come and enticed them, and had turned them away from the apostle. "Oh, where is the blessedness you spoke of?" he says, as if that were now gone.

But that is the duty of people, and then and only then it is likely that the ministry of the Word can do any great good—when the people look on it as if God and Jesus Christ spoke to them.

I will only conclude with this one thing; and until you come to apprehend this, it is not likely that ever any great good to any purpose will be done. It is likely that it will be with you as it was with Samuel. You know that God called to Samuel. "Samuel,

Samuel,” said God. He ran to Eli, who said, “My son, I did not call thee.” Well, he went again and slept, and God called again. He did not know it was God’s voice, so he ran to Eli again. But, then, the text says that Eli perceived that God called the child, and Eli gave him instruction that if he called again he should say, “Lord, speak, for Thy servant heareth.” And then he went and slept again, and the Lord came and called to him, and he said, “Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth.” And then God opened his heart to Him.

Oh, God called the first time, and he thought it had been Eli and looked no further. God said no more to him, but left him; and so again the second time. But when he understood that it was God’s voice, then you observe that God opened Himself wonderfully to him, and showed him His mind to the fullest.

So it is with people. They come to hear the ministry of the Word; they hear a sound in their ears, and what they hear is very good. But they look only at a man. The man speaks, and they may, perhaps, commend the man and his sermon, and all the while God speaks not to their hearts. And then they will go the second time, and, it is true, God speaks to them. But they do not know it is God’s voice, and because they do not know it is God’s voice God does not make Himself known to them. But when the time of God’s love comes, this is the great ambassadorship that is sent to the children of men; and when He pleads with you, you should think that it is Christ that is pleading with you. When He is opening any Scripture to you, you should think that Jesus Christ is opening that Scripture to you. When you come with such a heart, then God opens all His mind to you.

I appeal to you whether it has not been just so. Are the dealings of God with you as they were with Samuel? You have

come once and again to a sermon, but have looked no further than Eli, to the minister. But when you have come to the Word with the proper disposition and said, "Lord, speak, for Thy servant heareth. Lord, reveal what Thou wilt. I will see it is Thine own ordinance, and the minister (though he is put a poor, weak man), yet he comes and stands in Thy stead and speaks in Thy name"—I say, when you come thus you shall find more in one sermon let out to you than in a thousand before. And here is the reason that many have lived thirty or forty years under a powerful ministry, and it has sounded in their ears, but they never have heard the mind of God savingly revealed to them. That is because they never have fallen down and said, "Lord, speak, for Thy servant heareth." Oh, do this, and you shall hear the greatest message from God. Then you shall have God opening Himself to you to the fullest.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

The Second Doctrine Propounded Further Prosecuted

I have made some entrance into this second point of doctrine that God and Christ speak through the ministers of His Word. What the ministers of God do (according to their rule and Word) is to be looked upon as if God and Christ did it. This is clear in the text: “As though God did beseech you, we pray you in Christ’s stead.”

For this I gave you divers scriptures; and I might add more. I thought to have added some more clear Scriptures, to show you that what the ministers do is as if God and Christ did it. I might name forty places that are clear in this point, but shall not so that I may proceed. What the minister of God speaks according to the rule of Scripture is as if God and Christ spoke, and it must be so if we consider the power that there is of Christ in the ministry. We have had experience that there is such a power of the ministry of the Word that it could not be but the power of God, with God and Christ in it. The Word has power to enlighten, to awaken conscience, to terrify the conscience, to humble, to bring down the stoutest proud heart in the world,

yes, and to convert souls. John 5:25 says, of the Word of the Son of God that brings life, "Verily I say unto you that the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Certainly this is spoken not only of the voice of the Son of God at the general resurrection, but it is now: "The hour is coming, and *now* is." It was so at that time, and is continually in the ministry of the Word. There is the voice of the Son of God that makes the dead hear and live.

Further, the word of the ministry must be looked upon as God's in this regard, because otherwise there could not be any ground or basis for faith by anything that is delivered in the ministry of the Word. Now we know that the ministry of the Word is a special ordinance that is appointed for the begetting of faith: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word preached" (Romans 10:17). It does not come so much by reading, no, not by reading the book of God, by reading of the Scripture, but by hearing the Word preached.

Now, then, you will say, "Indeed, the Word is the Bible; it is the Word of God." God speaks there; Christ speaks, and we may base our faith upon what we read there. But we must have something to base our faith upon when we hear it preached by man as well as when we read it. And it is clear by Scripture that God rather works by the hearing of it preached than by the reading of it. Unless we look on it as the Word of God and of Christ, we have nothing to rest our faith upon, for nothing that is human can be the bottom and ground of anyone's faith.

It is not the judgment of a man, though he be never so learned, never so holy a man, that can support or ground my faith. But when I come to hear him, believing that I can hear God, and Christ speaking in him, then have I a reason to ground my faith upon what he says. Therefore, here is the reason why

so many go away, and are only taken at the present hearing, but their hearts are not grounded in the truth: because they hear man only, and do not hear God. In contrast, consider what those men who came forth from Samaria said to the woman in John 4. The woman came and told them, "Here is a man that hath told me all that ever I did; is not He Christ?" And they went out to Him. But at length they said to her (when they had spoken to Him), "Now we do believe, not because thou hast told us, but because we have heard Him ourselves."

So many many a soul say, "I have been often hearing of sermons, and I have been taken with the preaching of such a man, and I did believe what he said, and it went into my heart in some measure." Oh, but now says a soul, "I do not believe because he tells me this, but I have heard in his preaching God and Christ Himself. It has not been he, but it has been Jesus Christ who has spoken to my heart." There could be no grounding of our faith unless that which is delivered in the ministry of the Word is looked on as God and Christ speaking in it.

OBJECTION. You will say, "Must we believe everything that the preacher speaks, as if God and Christ spoke it? Man may err."

ANSWER. Therefore you must compare what you hear with what you read, and be as the noble men of Berea who searched the Scriptures to see what Paul himself preached. They were not to accept Paul's preaching, but they were to compare it with other Scriptures. They were commended for it, and God forbid that we should think it much that people should examine anything we speak. Try all things and then keep that which is good. Search the Scriptures and compare what is delivered with Scripture, and then as far as it is according to the rule of Scripture which is spoken, though it is not directly the words of Scripture, yet when it is spoken in the name of God according

to Scripture it should be received as if God and Christ spoke it. We claim no such infallibility as the papists say the pope has. But we give to all people liberty to examine our doctrine by Scripture, and then God expects, and Christ expects, that it should be received as if God and Christ spoke it.

CHAPTER FIFTY

Use 1: Answering the Objections of the Arminians and the Wantons of Our Age

Now then, briefly, hence we have a use of instruction, whereby we have an answer to the objection both of the Arminians and of our late wantons. Arminians make this objection: when we preach (sometimes) that all men naturally are dead in sins and trespasses, and there is no free will in man, but man is as void of grace as the dead carcass that lies in the grave is void of natural life, they say, “If men are so dead in sins, why do you preach to them? Would it not be a vain thing to go and preach in the churchyard? Would they regard what you say? You preach that all are dead, and that there is no life at all in men to do any good; so why do you speak to them?”

This point answers that objection. Though it is true that all men naturally are dead in sins, and are before the Lord as a dead carrion, there is no dead carrion more loathsome in the eyes of us than every natural soul is in the eyes of God. But yet we come and preach to them. Why? Because in our preaching it is God and Christ speaking. Though our voices have no power

to raise from the dead, yet the voice of God has power to raise from the dead. If Christ speaks to one who is dead, he shall come forth. You know that in John 11:43, when Christ came to Lazarus, Christ said, "I say to thee, Lazarus, arise." It would be a vain thing for any of us to go to the grave and say, "Arise." But if Christ comes He can raise them presently.

So we preach to a congregation that is mixed. Some have lain in the grave of sin forty years perhaps, yet when we speak in the name of Christ, and Christ speaks together with us, we may speak to dead souls. For together with the word that is spoken there go power and life, for it is the Word of God, and not the word of man, that breathes forth life.

Again, this is an answer to the objection of our late wantons. They cry out against ministers calling men to duties, and account them "duty-mongers." Say they, "What do you call men to do? You tell them that they must do thus and thus, and they must perform duties and humble themselves." They think they have a great objection in that, because men have no power naturally, therefore it is a vain thing to call upon them to perform duties.

This answers them: we call upon them as the voice of Christ. Though they have no power themselves, yet we call upon them to set upon such duties; we call upon them to believe and to repent. They say it is in vain to call upon them to believe and repent. But the way that God works faith and repentance in the heart of man is to convey a power through His own voice in the ministry of His Word. And therefore we speak to them to believe and repent, as if they had power, because we know that to those who belong unto God's election the Lord will convey power through this word of His. It is not our voice, but it is the voice of God and Jesus Christ.

We would have you carry this meditation along with you at any time when we speak unto you and exhort you to come in

and repent and believe. Carry this meditation with you, and then you shall understand us aright. We would not have you think that we conceive you have power to believe and repent because we call upon you. But we expect that, while we are speaking to you, God and Christ will speak to your hearts so that power will be conveyed through that word of ours. And though it is not conveyed in this sermon, yet it may be in the next, or the one after that, and we hope in the end it will give repentance unto life.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

Use 2: Ministers Ought to Speak as the Oracles of God

The next use that arises from hence is the one the apostle Peter makes: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). Mark it, here is an exhortation to those who have to deal in the ministry of the Word. They must (when they speak the Word) speak it as the oracles of God so that what is delivered is the Word. You see it to be the oracles of God, and whatsoever a minister speaks (according to Scripture) is to be looked upon as the oracles of God.

Now, therefore, if it is so that the Word that is spoken (according to the rule of Scripture) is the oracles of God, then it is the duty of all who speak the Word of God to speak it in such a manner as it may appear to be the oracles of God. I am not now speaking to many ministers, and, therefore, I shall not enlarge myself in this as I otherwise would have done. Oh, with what a reverence should ministers speak, for they come to speak in Christ’s stead! And, therefore, they should speak in such a manner as becomes the voice of God and Jesus Christ. They should speak the oracles of God and not think to speak according to their own fancies, their own humors, and in their

own ways, but to speak as those who are sent in God's place to speak to the people as if Christ were speaking to them. They are, therefore, to consider that they are in the place of Christ, as in Matthew 7:29 it is said of Christ: "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." A minister of God is to preach in Christ's stead (for so the apostle says); therefore he is to labor to do what he can to express the very authority of Jesus Christ in his ministry. And there is a ministry that carries authority with it in the very consciences of men.

I have known of some who have come proudly into a congregation to scorn at the Word—profane Russians who have come on purpose to deface the ministry and the Word—and yet they have met with that authority in the Word so that their hearts have been daunted and they have fallen under the power of the Word. There is a great deal of difference in the manners and ways of preaching the Word. Some have authority, and others have no authority at all in it: that latter kind of preaching that is to please the humors of men. Some preachers pamper men's fancies, as it were; they have some fine, quaint words, so that their sentences shall be very smooth and (as they say) come off bravely. This dainty preacher shall have many fine Latin sentences and witty speeches, and he shall come into a pulpit and act as if he were to act a part upon the stage. These are the fine, quaint preachers, the court preachers (as they call them), but this is not to preach in Christ's stead.

It is very likely that this was the preaching of the scribes and Pharisees. But when Christ came to speak, He spoke as one whom God had given authority, and not as the scribes. There was a great deal of difference between His preaching and that of the scribes: He came with the authority of God. He came to preach to the consciences of men, not to the fancies of men.

And this difference that was in Him is in some measure and degree now. There are some who preach (to this very day) just as the scribes, but there are others who preach as Christ did. They preach to the consciences and hearts of people, and their words stick in the consciences of men. Though their listeners fret, vex, and go away in a rage, yet there is something that sticks to their consciences. They are either forced to yield to it or fly from it.

And here is the reason why many a man will cry out and say, "I will never hear such a minister." Why? What is the reason? His corrupt heart cannot bear that minister's preaching. The Word comes with power to his heart, and his guilty conscience cannot bear it. Now watch whether there is not some vile guiltiness in their spirits, who say of such men that they will never hear them any more, because their corrupt hearts cannot bear the authority of the Word, and of that preaching that is as if God and Christ spoke it, with authority and not with fine, quaint words. To this purpose you have an expression: "For Christ sent me" (1 Corinthians 1:17). He was to go in the name of Christ, "not with wisdom of words," not with the wisdom of men. What a text is here! How will those many men be able to answer this one text who make it their great duty to get wisdom of words? But mark the dangers of this, "lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect." There is a most hideous wickedness in this, that a man should regard more to be commended as a fine, witty, neat, smooth preacher than he should have regard to the cross of Christ to take effect, to having Christ be honored.

We find by experience that such preaching scarcely ever stirs the soul; it seldom or never works upon the heart. Once even a prelate who was not the best, but one ill enough equipped, and known to many here, I suppose (I heard it with my own ears),

said that he was so far convinced that when he came to present a minister to such a town, he asked whether there were not some in the place who desired some others.

“Yes,” said they, “there are some who desire a university man to come to them.”

“But,” said he, “the preaching that is there will not humble a soul; it does not tend to humiliation.” I heard this even from one who I know was not a friend to powerful preaching; and yet his conscience was so far moved toward taking a different view because the wisdom of words and learning is there shown. But that way of preaching the gospel makes the cross of Christ to be of no effect. Your flaunting preachers, when do they convert a soul? Therefore (says the apostle), if we preach so as to do good, it must be such a preaching as he describes in verse 18: “It must be foolishness to wicked men, but to those that are saved it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

Wicked, carnal men will say, “Here is no scholarship, no learning in such a sermon.” Well, it is foolishness to them; but “to those who are saved, it is the power of God to salvation.”

Even a poor man may say, “I know not what they say, but I find a power in it; my eyes were never awakened until now; my heart was never wrought upon until now.” To those who are saved it is the power of God. If you find a power in that which wicked men call foolishness, it is a good argument that you are one who shall be saved when it quickens you. And again in verse 19: “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” All their bravery shall come to nothing. And then in verse 23: “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greek foolishness.” And then again in chapter 2, verse 1: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, nor of man’s wisdom.”

You will say, "It was because Paul could not." No, Paul was an admirable scholar, a most eloquent man; he was brought up under the feet of Gamaliel, and yet this man came not with excellency of speech or wisdom of words when he declared to them the excellencies of God. For he continues in verse 2, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." This makes the Word powerful, when it comes in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, and not with enticing words of man's wisdom. Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. How is it that we speak wisdom among those who are perfect? There is wisdom in preaching.

You will say, "What, should preachers be fools?"

No, God forbid. There should be the greatest wisdom that can be, and this is no warrant for one to come into the pulpit and speak extempore. We do not come to justify a raw and empty discourse that has nothing in it but mere words and a noise, but has no solidity. No, let ministers study and labor to be as solid as they can, search into the mysteries of the gospel, and open the secrets of God. And so it will prevail with the consciences of men, and, if ministers have any gifts, there is matter enough to make use of the gifts of those who are most able, and that which requires their study. So the apostle would have Timothy to study, and therefore there is no justifying of those who do not study.

But we must remember that we come to speak in Christ's stead. Christ certainly did not come with empty words, but He came to open the counsels of His Father, and He revealed the great mysteries of the gospel in a solid way. And so with the apostles: that which they spoke was weighty and solid (though it was not with vain words and phrases, as I noted before). But this I point out, not that I am directing my speech as much to

ministers as to you people: God and Christ speak in the ministry of the Word, and therefore you should desire and affect such a kind of ministry wherein God speaks most, wherein Christ speaks most, wherein you can hear the voice of God and Christ.

I know no one argument that more fully evidences the difference between the carnal heart and the gracious, spiritual heart than this. What ministry does your heart most favor and relish? Hereby you may know the temper of your hearts. One may know the temper of the body by knowing what food one most favors. So we may know the temper of the heart by knowing what food it most relishes. If you relish frothy food, your heart is the same way. But if you relish and savor a spiritual ministry that comes in the power and authority of God and Christ—that speaks to your heart and conscience—this is an evidence and sign of a gracious disposition in your heart.

And the truth is, if in one who is fallen (or in a great measure departed) from God there are any sparks of grace remaining, they will appear in this as much as in anything: though his heart is grown more loose than it was, yet still he cannot but acknowledge that he finds more power in such a spiritual ministry than in another.

But carnal hearts will savor and relish a ministry that is a mere word ministry, that has least of God and Christ; where there is but little of God and Christ in the heart, there the ministry that has least of God and Christ is most relished. Some women, and some who are ignorant, if they hear a sermon that has a great deal of Greek and Latin in it that they cannot understand, go away and commend the sermon, though they understand not any one thing of it. I have heard an excellent story of a poor beggar (in Queen Elizabeth's time) who heard a sermon at the court, and heard a great many Latin sentences and eloquent speeches. The poor beggar followed the minister

when he was going away and blessed God, saying, "Oh, master doctor! I bless God, and thank God at my heart."

The minister turned about and asked him, "What is the matter?"

"Oh, master doctor," said he, "I hope the old religion is coming in again."

But have not the prelates silenced those men who wrought most upon the heart and conscience? If any preached so that their ministry came to be powerful and prevail upon the hearts and consciences of men, the prelates would not let them stand.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

In What Kind of Ministry God Speaks Most

Now you will say, “How shall I know what kind of ministry it is wherein God speaks most?”

For the answer to that I appeal to your consciences. What kind of preaching do you think there would be if Christ Himself were preaching to you? How do you think Christ Himself would preach if He were here on the earth? That which comes nearest to what Christ would preach is what you must favor certainly. Christ would not preach to defend superstitious vanities, for Christ (when He came to preach) preached so as the people many times derided and scorned Him. One time when He had finished His sermon (Luke 4:29), they carried Him to the edge of the hill over the city and would presently have broken His neck. Just read that sermon of Christ in Matthew 5–7. What type of preachers would you think your courtiers to be if Christ were preaching to you? Whatever comes nearest to what Christ would preach, that you must most favor and affect.

Second, that kind of preaching that you find in your consciences most prevails in the authority of the Word, which has humbled most hearts and converted most souls, is that which

Christ has set His seal unto. I appeal to you, what kind of preaching has humbled most souls and done the most good? Has not some poor, country preacher who has preached in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit converted more souls to God than a hundred bishops? So he may be able to say at the great day of judgment (according to his measure), as our blessed Savior said, "Here am I, and those whom you have given Me."

Third, examine on what side you are. Those who are on God's side know His voice: "My sheep hear My voice." But a stranger they will not follow. Take any town, poll the people, and see how the minister is liked; some are for him and some against him. But look into the difference between the lives of these kinds of men, those who are for and those who are against the minister, and see their different walkings. Come into such a place as this (because, they say, there are a thousand alehouses in Stepney), and I think there are hardly five who favor the ministry of the Word, and all your profane ones (generally) speak against the ministers.

Now I appeal to your consciences. If you were to stand before God at the day of judgment, on which side would you be? Either on the side of those who are drunkards, swearers, unclean persons, and railers at the ministry of the Word, or on the side of those who are willing to take pains to hear the Word of God, and who bless God for the ministry of His Word? Certainly, that preaching has the most of Christ in it that those who have the most of the Spirit of Christ do most favor; for they know the voice of Christ, and a stranger they will not hear. They can understand it, though wicked and ungodly ones cannot.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

Use 3: We Should Delight in the Word

*I*s the ministry of the Word such as has God and Christ speaking in it? Oh, then, how we should delight in it! How should we bless God for it! With what greediness should we come to hear at any time! What, is not the voice of Jesus Christ sweet to us? We have Christ wooing us, Christ exhorting us, and Christ comforting us. When we come to the Word, oh, with what readiness and cheerfulness should we come to hear the voice of Christ. If you are godly, Christ delights in your voice. When you are alone in your closets, and can speak but brokenly, oh, then, your voice is delightful to Him. Therefore, the voice of Christ should be very delightful to you.

I will give you a text or two for proof of this. Christ speaks to the church: "O My dove! that are in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs: let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Solomon 2:14). Oh, let me hear your voice, My dove. Oh, you who are in the secret places of the stairs; are you alone into a hole to pray? For it is spoken here of the state of the Church in times of persecution that they dare not come together openly (howsoever wicked men will rail at them, and

claim that, they get into corners to do thus and thus), but, says Christ, "You that are in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your countenance is comely." Again, in Song of Solomon 4:11: "Thy lips drop as the honeycomb, O My spouse!" When the saints speak *of* Christ or speak *to* Christ, their lips drop before Christ as the honeycomb.

Now what an argument is this? Shall your lips be so sweet to Christ, and shall not Christ's lips be as sweet to you! The ministry of the Word is as if Christ entreated and beseeched you. Oh, how sweet should it be to you if you have the Spirit of Christ! The Church of Christ answers what Christ said of her lips, of her voice, and of her mouth. So the Church answers to Christ in Song of Solomon 5. Mark what the church says of His mouth, what an echo and an answer to prayer. Says Christ to the church, "Thy lips (O My spouse) are as the honeycomb." The church replies, "Thy mouth (O my Savior) is most sweet" (5:16). John 3:29 says, "The friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears the bridegroom's voice, rejoiceth greatly."

If you are the spouse of Christ, you will rejoice to hear the voice of the Bridegroom; and every time you come to hear a conscionable sermon, you come to hear the very voice of the Bridegroom, and you cannot but rejoice in it. Oh, how sweet is one word of Christ to a gracious heart! And the spiritual communion with Christ here on earth is in His ordinances. We shall hereafter be always in His presence and see His face, but if we would have any evidence now that we shall have communion with Him in heaven, we must rejoice in the hearing of His Word.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

*Use 4: If God and Christ
Speak in the Word, How
Dreadful Ought It Be to the
Neglecters, Disobeyers, and
Condemners of the Word*

*I*f God and Christ speak in the ministry of His Word, then, oh, what a dreadful point is this to all the neglecters, disobeyers, and condemners of the ministry of the Word! You neglect the Word? Oh, what do you do when you neglect the Word? You turn your back on Jesus Christ and will not hear Him. And therefore, I suppose, you know that when one turns away his ear from hearing the law, his prayers shall be abominable. What, do you turn away your ear from hearing the Word? God professes that He will turn away His ear from hearing your prayers, and your prayers shall be abominable, for you turn away your ear from hearing Christ speaking to your soul, for it is in Christ's stead, as the apostle says. There will be a time when you would most have the ear of God to hear you. As you would have God to hear you then, so you must hear Him now.

Mark that text in Proverbs 1:24 against those who turn their ear from hearing God speak: “Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all My counsels, and you would have none of My reproofs.” It is as if He had said, “You thought it was but the word of such and such a man, yet you have set at naught all My counsels, and you would have none of My reproof; your hearts fretted and vexed that such a man reproved you. No, it is My reproof.” And mark what a doom follows in verse 28: “You shall call and I will not hear.”

“There was a time, friend, when I called to you by such a sermon, and you know that I spoke to your hearts and you turned a deaf ear to Me. You shall call your hearts out and I will not hear you.”

And there will come a time that you shall call to God’s ministers to pray for you. What, would you have God hear His ministers on your behalf, and will not you hear His ministers from God?

Ambrose said to Theodosius, the emperor: “Will not you hear me, seeing you desire that I should be heard for you?” He said this after Theodosius had fallen to a great sin, and Ambrose came to reprove him. “You desire that I should be heard for you; therefore you be willing to hear me.” So say I to all men who live in any way of sin: hear God’s ministers now, for a day will come when you will be glad that God should hear His ministers for you. Oh, hear us when we come in the name of God. We would not have you to hear us if we speak our own fancies.

Thus for those who concerns neglect the Word; now a word or two to those who disobey the Word. They will set their judgments against the judgments of the ministers, and, let him say what he will, their response is: “It is but his opinion.” Do you know what you say? This rebellion is against God and against

Christ. It is as if there were this language in your hearts: "Christ says, 'I will have this done,' but my lusts say they will have that done." Oh, it will be charged on you one day that the voice of the devil was stronger with you than the voice of Christ. But, specifically, this is to condemn the Word, to set at naught God's counsels, to go away and condemn the Word.

Do you know what you are doing? Let me apply these two Scriptures to you, you who despise and scorn the Word, who cannot go out in public without talking of what you hear in a condemning manner. Consider but these two texts, I pray. First, consider this text out of which God speaks to you, you who get into company, and there are warm with wine, and lift up the voice and laugh: "Against whom have you lifted up your voice?" (Isaiah 37:23). Do you think it is against Hezekiah? "No, it is against the Holy One of Israel." Do you think it is against such a man who preaches on such a day? No, it is against the Holy God and Jesus Christ, and this is on your score written in heaven: "Here is one who has reproached the Holy One and Jesus Christ!" Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth Me." That is true (not only of the disciples who at that time were on the earth) but of all the faithful ministers to the end of the world, for Christ said when He sent them out, "I will be with you to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). They died more than a thousand years ago, and yet Christ had promised to be with them, that is, those who would succeed them; He would be with them to the end of the world.

And this text concerns every faithful minister as well as the disciples of Christ. All that time you actually despise Jesus Christ and God His Father when you despise the ministry of His Word. For the Lord's sake, take heed what you do. When you have to deal with the Word, you have to deal with an edged tool; it is that which will either save you or destroy you forever. You who

have been guilty of neglecting the Word, may the Lord strike and humble your hearts.

And for a comfort for times to come, I will apply but one Scripture further to you, to make the point that, in the faithful ministry of the Word, God and Christ speak unto the people. Take this exhortation, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. If they escape not who refused Him that speaketh. If they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away Him that speaketh from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25). The ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the law are compared, one speaking from earth, the other from heaven. The truth is, though, they were both from heaven. But now in the ministry of the gospel, God has sent His own Son to you. "In the latter days, He hath spoken by His Son," says the apostle; "God who at sundry times spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

In former times God spoke by His prophets. There was the voice of God, but it was not as clear that it was the voice of God; though it is true that Christ did speak then by the prophets, Christ was not identified as speaking by them. But now in these days, God has spoken by His Son, and God has reserved the ministry of His grace and His eternal counsels concerning the children of men for His Son; and not only His Son personally, but His Son in the ministry of His Word.

Now you will say, "If Christ preached (as you say He does), there would be more power. When Christ preached in person, the Pharisees derided Him." In the original it is, "They blew their noses at Him." And mark, those who were covetous derided Him; they even derided Jesus Christ Himself! A worldly heart that has grown rich, that has risen from a low estate to a far greater, will deride the most excellent preaching in the world!

So take heed that you do not despise the ministry, for certainly the voice of Christ will prevail one day. If it does not prevail here in the Word, it shall prevail one day when Christ shall say, "Depart from Me, you cursed." Though you did not obey the present voice of Christ, yet you shall obey the other voice that day. I will now wind up this point with a word of exhortation.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

How We Ought to Receive the Word

Seeing God and Christ speak to us in the ministry of the Word, let us come with other manner of thoughts to hear the Word than heretofore we have done. I remember I said before that the Word cannot be effectual until we come to know the voice of Christ in it, as in the case of Samuel. I will give you another text to show what an admirable effect it will work upon the hearts of men and women if they come to hear the preaching of the Word as the voice of God and Christ. In Acts 10:33 you shall find that Cornelius sent for Peter to come to him immediately: "Therefore I sent to thee, and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Here is a gracious disposition of heart in Cornelius, a soldier, and other soldiers and friends of his.

Then Peter preached with courage. And when people shall, by their behavior, with reverence and affection, attend as if they intended to know something of the mind of God, this encourages a preacher. And then as soon as ever Peter had ended his sermon, no, before he had ended his sermon (the

text says), we read in verse 44 that “while Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all them which heard the word.” This is no marvel, they came with such a disposition of heart.

We are here, all of us, to know and hear what is commanded of God (coming with such a frame of spirit). Now, while Peter was yet speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on them who were to hear the Word. And so it will be with you when you are alone. Before you come, say, “Oh, Lord, that Thou wouldst speak to my heart.” So you have it in Isaiah 2:3: “Come, let us go to the house of the Lord.” This is an excellent verse for those who are coming to hear; it is a prophecy of the times of the gospel, containing an excellent resolution, an excellent temper of heart for people who are going to hear sermons. “Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.” We are all here to hear what God will say to us. When at any time there is any truth made known to you, you should receive it with such an affection, thinking, “God this day has revealed some part of His mind that I did not find to be so before.” And, when you hear of any sin revealed, you should bless God and say, “The Lord has met with my heart this day.” Oh, think it not an evil, but bless God that Christ will think of you!

And so you should behave. Is there an exhortation to any duty? God and Jesus Christ have exhorted you this day; you should look on it as if God and Christ have been persuading and exhorting you. Is there any word of comfort and promise applied to you? You should look on it as if God and Jesus Christ had spoken a word of comfort to your heart this day. Oh, if you would come with such a disposition so as to receive all from God and Jesus Christ, then you may expect that the Holy Spirit should fall on you. It is no marvel if, when people come through custom and merely because others come, or though

some other vain respect, that then they come and go away, and never feel any work of the Holy Spirit. But such as come with teachable hearts may expect that the Holy Spirit should come and fall on them. When the people of Nineveh repented, they believed God. So, then, the stoutest and proudest heart, yes, and the hardest heart in the world, if it comes to believe God, will then repent. I am the more willing to speak at length on this because this sermon may make profitable many other sermons, and because it is for want of that true work of this point on your hearts that so many sermons do so little good.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

*The Third Doctrine
Propounded in Chapter 45
Prosecuted*

*T*he third doctrine propounded in chapter 45 is that the consideration of the excellency of the gospel that is committed to the ministers to preach makes those who are faithful to be very earnest in their ministry.

“Now to us is committed the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead.” Now, then, this point, that “the word of reconciliation is committed to us, and we pray you in Christ’s stead,” is what puts us on to the earnestness that you see in us.

First, the consideration of the excellency of the gospel that is committed to its ministers is what should make them earnest in their ministry, and make them labor with all their might to draw people to that love of the gospel.

The apostle continues the same in the beginning of the next chapter. He says again and again that it is the ministry of reconciliation that is committed to them. After that he tells them that he beseeches and prays in Christ’s stead. And

then he goes back over it again in the beginning of the next chapter, as if he had not done enough. Oh, this ministry of reconciliation! It is the grace of God unto people. "Oh, we beseech you," says the apostle, "do not receive this grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). The apostles, and other faithful ministers, satisfy not themselves merely in performing a task (yet they can come and speak an hour, and speak to people such things as may please their ears), but they look after what they do, so as to be solicitous and earnest, for fear it should be in vain.

Oh, then, we are ambassadors. And I will show you another very remarkable text, Colossians 1:25: "I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God." And then he commends this ministry of his in the mystery that has been hidden from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to the saints. It may be that carnal hearts look upon it as a mad and unsavory thing, but it is made manifest to the saints to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles.

Now, then, mark how our point comes in verse 28. The apostle wishes to gain every man; he is loath to lose any one of his auditors. He uses the phrase "every man, every man, every man," three times in one verse. "Whereunto also I labor, striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily" (verse 29). What phrases are here heaped one on another? "I do not make the work of the ministry an idle work, as if I went about all the day from one company to another, from tavern to tavern all the week, and then think to come and preach on the Lord's day to you, and so make it an idle business. But it is my labor—not only so, but I strive." And how does he strive? Not merely according to human strength; he strives beyond that. "I

labor, striving according to His working. It is the Word of God I confess, and my labor and striving is according to His working.”

Yet still this is not enough: “according to His working which works in me, which works in me mightily. The work of God that works in me mightily, according to that I labor.” And so again, in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, of the trust that is committed unto us: “We are allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel; even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God.” He is upright in that he dares not be but faithful in so great a trust which is committed to him. And then, upon this, he tells them in verse 8: “We were willing to impart our own souls,” because this gospel, we knew, would be so excellent.

We might be very lengthy in this point, so I will give you the ground of it in a very few words in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Reasons for Faithful Ministers' Earnestness:

1. Their love for God
2. Their love for Jesus Christ
3. Their love for the souls to whom they preach
4. A kind of love for themselves

*T*hose who have committed to them the ministry of reconciliation are earnest about their work.

1. That which makes them so earnest is the love they have for God, for they know that this is the great glory of God. That which shines in the ministry of reconciliation is that which they go to declare to the world; and, unless the Lord has His glory in that, He has His glory in nothing in comparison. Therefore, that they might testify to their love to God, that the God whom their souls love may have His glory in that which is indeed His glory and the masterpiece of all His works, oh, this is what makes them earnest. They think, "If the Lord does not have His glory here, where shall He have His glory?" Oh, it is infinite pity that in so great a work

(wherein so much of the glory of God does appear) the Lord should have no glory.

2. The second thing that makes them earnest is their dear love for Jesus Christ. Every faithful minister of Christ bears a dear affection towards Jesus Christ, and their souls desire that Jesus Christ might be lifted up in the world. Now there is nothing that lifts up Jesus Christ in the world so much as the ministry of the gospel. Those who have any love for Christ, who know what Christ has done for them, desire to lift up His name. And, besides, the honor the work puts them upon is the ministry of reconciliation, and an honorable work it is.

Therefore the apostle Paul, in Romans 15:20, has a notable expression for that purpose: "honor of the work." It is the ministry of the gospel, in verse 20. The word we translate "strived" in English in the Greek signifies "to love the honor of it." Those who understand the language know that it is a word that signifies "to love the honor of a thing."

So he says, "I was ambitious to preach the gospel" (that is the phrase), and so it may be translated. So Paul was not ambitious for a great living, or to be brave, or in power, or to be a justice of the peace, or a lord, or the like (as many ministers of late have been); but his ambition was to preach the gospel, looking on that as the greatest preferment that any of the sons of men were capable of, or that he could desire in the world.

3. The consideration of the ministry of the gospel makes ministers earnest in love for their brethren, and for the souls of the people to whom they preach. For they know that souls are utterly undone unless they come to know God in Jesus Christ, unless they come to have the mystery of the gospel revealed. Whatsoever excellencies they have in this world, what gifts of nature they have, yet they are lost, undone, miserable creatures

forever, and better they had never been born; better they had never breathed in the air unless Jesus Christ is revealed to them. Now it is impossible for any man who knows the necessity of the revelation of Christ, if the ministry of the gospel is committed to him, not to be earnest and faithful in the work of the ministry.

4. There may be some argument from love for themselves. To those who have the ministry of the gospel committed to them, God gives leave in some sense to love themselves, but only in such a way so as to make them earnest in the ministry.

First, if they are faithful in the ministry of the gospel, and God goes along with them (as He will if they be faithful), then, oh, how many souls should bless them for any one sermon. If perhaps they go into a strange place and work on a few souls, they shall hear these souls blessing God for them every time they go into God's presence. Now what a wonderful encouragement is it for a minister to be painstaking in the work of ministry of the gospel! This is a greater matter than to have a bishopric, to have but one soul bless God whom God has been pleased to work upon; and this is no other than we challenge to be our due, if we by any means may be poor instruments of God to reveal Christ to any of your souls. This is due in justice: that you should ever mention us before the throne of grace, and that the blessing of your prayers should be upon us. And this is a mighty encouragement to make ministers earnest, not only to prepare a sermon, but to be striving to reveal the ministries of Christ to their souls.

And as they will be blessing Christ here, so by this means those who are faithful will give a good account at the day of Jesus Christ. And they shall be able to behold the face of Christ when He shall appear, who is the great Bishop of their souls. He will come with His visitations one day; and, when that is

come, then they shall not have encouragement who have read services and worn surplices every day. But they shall be able to look upon His face with joy who have been faithful in the work of the ministry of the gospel. And those whom they have done good unto shall be their joy and their crown at that day.

The apostle exhorts the Philippians, among other things, that they should “hold forth the Word, the Word of life.” He wants them to manifest the power of the gospel in their lives, “that I may rejoice in the day of Jesus Christ that I have not run in vain nor labored in vain” (Philippians 2:16). It is an argument to prevail with people to embrace the gospel that they may recompense those who labor among them with this reward: that they may have joy in the day of Jesus Christ, that they may be able to come to Christ and say, “Blessed Savior here am I, and those whom Thou hast given me.”

These are sufficient reasons, and so I will pass on.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

Use 1: The Horrible Wickedness of Those Who Are Idle in the Ministry

*F*irst, you may see what a horrible wickedness it is for any who take upon themselves to be ministers of the gospel and yet are idle. To be an idle shepherd, to be unfaithful in this, is a most detestable wickedness. Of all men in the world, those men have given up their spirits to wickedness who have the weight of the ministry of the gospel to lie upon their charge, and yet are idle. Oh, it is woeful that ever that man was born who should take upon himself such a glorious ministry as the ministry of the gospel, and therein be negligent of preaching, or by a scandalous life do mischief to others. It had been better that he had never been born. The apostle said, “Woe to me if I preach not” (1 Corinthians 9:16); so may they say, “Woe to us if we are negligent in it,” and “woe to us if we (by our scandalous lives) hinder the fruit of our own preaching, and of other men’s preaching also.” But we shall let that pass.

Use 2: Where This Earnestness Comes From

Labor to inform yourselves in this: when you see any faithful minister earnest in this work of ministry, know what the ground is. Perhaps some of you wonder why he cannot content himself as some others; but note where the ground lies, from where it comes. It is the ministry of the gospel that is committed to him; he knows it is a glorious ministry; he sees much of Jesus Christ in it; the glory of God shines in it, and if he is faithful, and has any love for Christ and the saints and their souls, it is impossible but that he must be earnest in it.

Paul was so earnest that the people thought him mad: “You may think we are beside ourselves; well, it is for your cause, and it is the love of Christ that constrains us; we cannot but do that we do” (2 Corinthians 5:13–14). The apostle Peter spoke similarly in another place. So says any faithful minister (think of it what you will), “We cannot but speak what the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is, what it is that we have seen, and what it is that we have heard out of the ministry of the gospel ourselves; the love of Christ constrains us.” Or as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:11: “Knowing therefore the terror of the

Lord” (then much more the grace of the Lord) “we persuade men.” If only God would convince you of this: that when you hear anything of the mystery of the gospel opened to you, and any earnestness of spirit manifested in it, you might know that the ground and principle of that earnestness is this: the apprehension of the glory of this ministry (as it is such an excellent ministry). Therefore it is that if all faithful ministers of God are so earnest in their ministry, it should prevail more with your hearts to receive what is delivered in such a way.

But we must pass on to the main point in the text.

CHAPTER SIXTY

The Fourth Doctrine Propounded in Chapter 45

*A*s though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." There is not in any Scripture (that I know) more fully set out the earnest desire of Jesus Christ to be reconciled unto sinners than here. This expression is (after the manner of men) to express the earnestness of God's heart in His desires to be reconciled to sinners, and that is our point of doctrine. Our doctrine shall be not merely the words, but the scope and ground of these expressions:

DOCTRINE 4. God and Jesus Christ are exceedingly willing, and very desirous, to be reconciled unto sinners.

I will open to you in several manifestations and demonstrations the willingness and desire that are in God and Christ to be reconciled unto sinners; then I will answer a question about why sinners are not reconciled to God, if God is so willing; and then I will apply it.

The fifth and last doctrine will come by way of uses: that

therefore the ministers of God should entreat (likewise) and beseech you, and by all means labor to draw your souls to be reconciled unto God.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

The First Argument Manifesting the Exceeding Willingness of God to Be Reconciled to Sinners

*F*irst, let us consider the willingness of God to be reconciled with sinners, and why God manifests this beginning a little low and then rising highest. God ministers this, first, by His patience towards sinners; in that the Lord is long-suffering toward sinners He manifests thereby that He is willing to be reconciled. The Scripture draws an argument from Romans 2:4. It is as if the apostle should say, “The patience of God holds forth that you should come in and repent, that you might obtain mercy from God, or otherwise it leads you to repentance.” Unless it should hold forth God’s willingness to be reconciled, it could not draw the heart to repentance, but it leads in that way.

And this has a great deal of force to draw the heart of man to repentance, because it holds forth the willingness of God to be reconciled to sinners. If God were not willing to be reconciled to you, He would throw you off, and there would

be the end of you, or at best He would exercise such patience that should not lead you to repentance. This He did with the devils: as soon as they had sinned He clasped His chains on them and now reserves them in chains of darkness. There is no such patience of God towards them as to be any argument to draw them to repentance. Therefore they cannot draw any encouraging conclusion from any work of God's patience so as to bring them towards God again. But all sinners may do so who are sons of men. Has God spared your life at such and such a time? Know that in that work of His, He manifests His willingness to be reconciled to your soul, as if a man has an enemy at an advantage and will not take it. Does not this signify that He is willing to be at peace with him?

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

The Second Argument

*S*econd, God has manifested Himself as very willing to be reconciled to sinners in that He has made it the great masterpiece of all His works to provide a way for your reconciliation to Him. The Lord has wrought so wonderfully for the children of men, rather than for angels, in sending His Son and making Him a curse for our sins. In this the Lord proclaims in a loud voice to all the world: “Oh, be it known to all you sinners that I am willing to be reconciled to you.”

We need not name Scripture for this, for the whole doctrine of the gospel is full of it. Oh, the heart of God is much in this work of reconciliation. All the arguments in the world, all the expressions that possibly could have been, could never have held forth this as much as this proclamation that God has sent His Son into the world to die for man’s sins. This holds it forth and proclaims it (with the loudest voice that possibly can be), that God is infinitely willing to be reconciled to sinners.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

The Third Argument

*A*nd, then, after this work of God in sending His Son, mark how God expresses Himself to the children of men! He professes that there is nothing wherein He more glories than He does in this: to show mercy to sinners. He makes account that the chief glory He has in the world is to show mercy to sinners. Certainly that which His soul is so well pleased with, and that which He accounts Himself most honored by, is when sinners shall come in unto Him to repent so that He may be reconciled unto them.

Suppose that a man should do this who has an enemy, and should manifest this spirit to some of his friends who sit at his table by saying, “Such a one is an enemy to me. But, oh, how fain would I have him come in that there might be peace between him and me, and I would count it as great an honor as ever I had in my life.” Would not anyone say that this man was willing to be reconciled? Certainly God does so, and therefore, when the Lord was proclaiming His glory, as Moses had desired, that the Lord’s glory should pass by him (Exodus 33:17–23), and what was that glory? “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin”

(Exodus 34:6–7). It is as if God should say, “Moses, would you see My glory? This is it: I am merciful and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Here is the height of My glory; in this is My magnificence made known.”

Another remarkable passage I shall make use of is Isaiah 30:18: “And therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious, and therefore will He be exalted.” How will God be exalted? In having mercy upon you. “Therefore, He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you.” And so he goes on: “For the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are they that wait for Him.” So God accounts Himself an exalted God when He has mercy on a sinner. Surely He is very willing to be reconciled to a sinner, if He counts Himself an exalted God when a sinner comes in and believes in His Son. “Now am I exalted,” says God. “This is what My soul glories in; this I account to be a happiness to Me.” God is exalted in showing mercy, and that is the conclusion of this argument.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

The Fourth Argument

*F*ourth, the Lord expresses His willingness to be reconciled to sinners with a sigh, which is a note of earnestness of desire: “Oh, that there were such a heart in them” (Deuteronomy 5:29). When we express our desires we say, “I would there were such a thing.” But when we express our most earnest desire, then we express it with an “Oh!” “Oh! that there were.” So says God, “Oh! that they had such a heart; that they would fear Me, and walk in My ways.” And why does God express this? It is “that it might be well with them, and with their children forever.” Therefore, “Oh! that there were such a heart.”

It is observable that if you turn your eyes to the former part of the chapter, you shall find that these people said that whatsoever God had spoken, that they would do. But the Lord saw that there was not a thorough commitment of their hearts to Him, so as to resign themselves wholly to Him. And, therefore, the Lord (as it were) fetches a sigh in the earnestness of His desire: “Oh! that there were such a heart in them.” If a man had fallen out with another, when he was in his bed chamber or at his table, he would fetch a sigh and say, “Oh! that such a one would come in and be reconciled to me. How glad would I be

to be reconciled to him! How my soul longs after him!” Would not everyone say that this man earnestly desired reconciliation with that person? But thus does God! He sits (as it were) and says, “Oh, that there were such a heart!”

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

The Fifth Argument

*T*he Lord not only expresses His desire by a sigh, but by an oath. He takes a solemn oath to show how willing He is that sinners should come in and be reconciled to Him. This is the greatest oath that God ever took, to profess His willingness that sinners should not die, but come in and be reconciled to Him. Ezekiel 33:11: “Say to them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner.”

“As I live, saith the Lord God.” They were pining away in their wickedness, lying down in their sins. “Now as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn.” Turn, turn, oh, turn! Why will you die?

It is as if a poor sinner should lie down and say, “The Lord is provoked against me and He will not be reconciled to me. The wrath of God is out against me, and He will avenge Himself on me.” The Lord looks on a sinner lying in this manner, and He

bids His servants go and say to Him, “The Lord swears by His own life, and says to this sinner, ‘As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner. I swear by Myself because I have no greater to swear by.’”

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

The Sixth Argument

*A*nother argument is that God manifests in His Word that above all works that are pleasing to Him, and that He would have people most to respect in this world, is the work of believing in His Son and laying hold on Him, and upon that mercy of His that He offers in His Son. That is the great work that He is more pleased with more than all the works they do, and not doing that is the greatest offense whereby they can offend God; they cannot offend God more in doing anything in the world. And this shows the willingness of God to be reconciled to sinners. God is pleased with a sinner who comes in to take hold of His mercy.

This you have in John 6:29: "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." By way of excellency, this is above all other works. It is as if God should say, "If you should do the most famous work that ever man did in this world, I would not delight in it. I would not care for that in comparison with this work of coming in and believing in my Son."

Is there a man who would be the great conqueror of the whole world, a man who would be famous in all the world? Let a poor soul, a penitent heart, come in and close with God's grace in Jesus Christ, and rest itself upon mercy in Christ for

reconciliation. This poor soul, though the meanest possible to be imagined in the whole nation, is a more glorious work in God's eye than the most glorious work of the greatest conqueror of the earth. If you were able to rule the sea, if you were able to govern all the world, if you were able to command the heavens, it would not be such a glorious work in the eyes of God as to come and lay hold upon His Son as He is tendered in the gospel.

If you should give all your alms to the poor and your body to be burned, yet it would be nothing compared to the work of believing in His Son. In John 3, God is most displeased with people's not believing in His Son. It is as if God should say, "It is true, you were naturally enemies to Me, and you lived in ways of enmity against Me. Oh, you have provoked Me all your days. When you were young, you were a drunken, unclean, profane youth, a liar, a swearer, and a Sabbath-breaker. But yet you live to hear the voice of the gospel sounding in your ears, and to have the offer of Jesus Christ to your souls for the pardon of your sins. Now be it known to you that all the oaths that ever you swore, all your blasphemies, all your drunkenness, all your uncleanness, all your Sabbath-breaking (put them all together), they will not provoke Me so much as rejecting My grace in Jesus Christ that I tender to you."

That is the condemnation of the world; all the other iniquities will not sink you down so deep in hell as not coming to believe in Jesus Christ, as not laying hold upon the grace of God that is tendered to you in the gospel. Now, is not God very willing to be reconciled when He shall manifest Himself thus unto sinful men?

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

The Seventh Argument

*Y*et, further, God manifests Himself as willing to be reconciled in that when He sees that (notwithstanding all these expressions that have been spoken of) sinners will not come in, God will seek them. Seeing they will not seek Him, God seeks sinners Himself. This is a point you have heard before, that God is with us before we are with Him. God comes to us because we will not seek Him.

If a man is fallen out with another, he should come and seek him. But he will not do so because he has such a stout heart. "Well," he may finally say, "that I may convince him that I am not such an austere man as he conceives me to be, I will seek him first; and I will not only seek him, but I will go to him and beseech him."

And that you have in the Scripture: Christ is said to come

to save and to seek that which was lost. We were all lost and would not seek Him. But He was willing to come; yes, He came from the bosom of His Father. He came into the world, and His great errand was to seek those who were lost. And when He had found them He beseeched them to be reconciled to Him.

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

The Eighth Argument

Further, God manifests Himself as willing to be reconciled in the ways of His dealing with wretched, sinful men, in sending His grace to allure the hearts of sinners. The Lord sends His mercy to spread all the beauty and luster thereof before the sons of men, all the excellency and glory of it before the soul, that it may entice the soul of the sinner to come in to Him. He does not merely send for and seek him, but endeavors that He might overcome the hearts of men with love and mercy. This is God's way to cause His mercy to stand before the soul, and so to spread the beauty and excellency of it, so that it moves, entices, and allures the hearts of men, so that God, as it were, by cords of love, might draw the hearts of poor, sinful men to Himself.

If God only scared men to come in to Him—if the Lord came in never such a terrible way to force us to come in, so that peace might be made up between God and us, it would be something. But we have cause to bless God that the Lord (besides that way of terror and wrath, though sometimes He will use that way to stop men in the course of their sins, and to force them to come in) goes forth and sends His mercy to stand before the soul and spread the beauty, excellency, and glory

of it before the heart of the sinner so that it might allure the sinner to come in.

So God speaks of His people in Hosea 2:14. There was a great breach between Israel and God at the time, and God, to make up the breach (when He would be pacified towards Israel), expresses it in this manner: “Therefore, behold, I will allure her.” And in Hosea 11:4, mark: “I drew them with the cords of a man, and with cords of love.”

“I dealt with them in a suitable way, because man’s nature would rather be drawn than driven, and cannot so well bear to be driven with violence as to be drawn by love. Therefore (says God), I will deal with them according to their own nature and in a suitable way. I draw them with the cords of a man and with bonds of love.”

Here are the gracious expressions of God to wretched sinners, to break their hearts that they may come in and be reconciled to Him. God takes away the terror of His greatness, and comes in loving and sweet ways to draw the hearts of sinners. I appeal to your consciences, have not you who know what it is to be reconciled to God had the Lord setting the riches of His grace before your souls? Have not you seen the alluring attributes of God presented before you to gain your hearts unto Himself?

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

The Ninth Argument

Another argument is this: the Lord is willing to yield unto His creatures as far as He can with honor, for such is the way of the gospel in bringing sinners to God. God has yielded to His creatures as far as can be conceived to be done with honor (He cannot deny Himself and His glory). Since God must have His glory, it is impossible that God should yield further to the creature than He has done. Whereas God might have required satisfaction in our persons, He has yielded this right.

This is the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works: the covenant of works required perfect obedience in our persons, so that, if we did not obey, it required satisfaction of us. Now in the covenant of grace there is a high consideration, as it were. God is content to take it in surety. He will be content for our part if there is uprightness, if there is but endeavors, if there is but willingness of heart, though He sees that we provoke Him day by day. “Well,” says God, “whereas I stood on perfect obedience in the covenant of works, now I will be satisfied with the will for the deed. If there is uprightness of heart, though there are many weaknesses, yet I will be willing and content with that.”

Now does not a man show himself willing to be reconciled to another when he shall say, "Well, let there be any terms propounded that can be, I will yield to any terms so far as I can with honor. I must not dishonor myself. But so far as can be, I yield"? God has done this. He professes to the world that so far as He can He has yielded to us. Now if we should not accept the terms that He requires (for they are such terms, so reasonable, so generous, that cannot be imagined less), there cannot be less required of the creature than is by the Creator.

OBJECTION. "But believing is a great matter."

ANSWER. But considered in itself, it is not such a great matter, but only in relation to Christ. In its own nature it is but as a poor beggar who puts forth his hand to take the alms; and it is God who gives it to us too. Now if we do anything, what we do in simply receiving (especially when we have a hand given us by God wherewith to receive) is as if a beggar had alms promised him if he would come and take it.

"Oh, but," says the beggar, "I am lame. I cannot go, and my hand is withered. I cannot stretch it forth." He who would give alms says, "I will help the beggar there. I will help him have legs to go, and I will heal his hand and give it strength whereby he shall put it forth to receive the alms. Only do not struggle against me, and do not resist me. I will be with you, and you shall lean upon me. I will give you stilts." Is not this as much consideration as can be? And so it is in the work of reconciliation of sinners to God. He gives alms, and He gives the hand wherewith to receive it.

CHAPTER SEVENTY

The Tenth Argument

And, then, the Lord manifests His willingness to be reconciled to sinners in that He professes to sinners that the greatest sins that ever they have committed shall not be a hindrance to this work of reconciliation. The Lord, I say, professes this to sinners. He sends His messengers to tell them that, though (perhaps) they may be conscious of some vile thing that they have committed whereby, they may think, God will never pass by that sin, it is not so. But God takes away that objection so that they shall never be able to say so. He makes it as clear as anything in this world, that there is no great sin that ever you have committed (except that one against the Holy Spirit); no other sin shall bar or hinder the work of your reconciliation.

And certainly, where that sin is committed, the heart will never desire to come in to be reconciled to God, but flies in the face of God to avenge himself upon God. But if you have a heart that desires to come in to God, that is an infallible argument that you have not committed that sin.

I might give you a great many Scriptures for this, to show that God professes that there is not any sin that shall bar the way between Him and you. "Come now, let us reason together, saith

the Lord” (Isaiah 1:18). Yes, come now, let us reason together. Thus God deals in a familiar way with sinners.

If a malefactor were before the prince shaking, quivering, and trembling, fearing that the prince would have his life, being conscious in himself of an abundance of evil that he has been guilty of, and the prince should go and take him by the hand, and say, “Come, let us rise up; let us reason together. Though your offenses are great, yet that shall not be a bar between you and me.” This is what we have authority to proclaim in the name of the Lord God of heaven. To every poor soul, to the worst of sinners, to the greatest of sinners that are here or can be near now, before the Lord, in His name, this I say: “There is nothing past between God and you, no sin that is yet past that shall be your undoing and the eternal destruction of your souls.” But it will be some sin that is yet to come; something that is yet to come will be the eternal destruction of every sinner in this congregation.

It is true, if God were to smite you now it would be for the sin that is past. But if God lets you live this day, your destruction will be rather for something that is yet to come than for anything that is past, for your continuance in hardness of heart and your unbelief from this time forward rather than for what is past.

If one had run in arrears and incurred a great deal of punishment, enough to be his undoing, this would be said to him: “Thus far you have run. But here is a proclamation: there is nothing that is past that shall be charged on you, but look to it for the time to come.” I do not say that all the sins that are past God will never reckon, but that He will never reckon with any of you for what is past, but for some cause of evil that you shall be guilty of in the future. That evil may go along with the present ones, and may cause God to bring up again that which is now passed over again. But that which will

be your undoing and destruction will be something that is to come; and if you continue in your wicked ways, then that will bring all upon you again.

But now if you have a heart this day, at this moment, to fall down before the Lord, to seek to make up your peace with Him, and to close with the grace of God in His Son, I can boldly pronounce that all your sins that are past are done away. Oh, remember that gracious offer of God in Isaiah 1:18. Whatsoever you have been before, yet that need be no discouragement to you. It is the continuance in your iniquity that will undo you; and now will not this soul justify God at the great day? Must not God be justified if any sinner in this congregation is awakened at last? I say, this argument shall rise up against them, and shall justify God against you.

Now God will say, "You who lived a long time in sin, you heard that after so many years of sinning, whatsoever your sins were before, yet some things that were then to come would be your destruction, or else you should never be destroyed. And yet you would venture for the time to come; you would be bold to add to that heap of your sins that have been so long in making, and thereby bring all your sins upon you that you had committed before."

And, therefore, righteous is God in the condemnation of this sinner. We speak of the willingness of God to be reconciled to sinners to the end that you might come in and be reconciled, or otherwise that the justice of God may be clear at the great day. And this is a special end of all the manifestation of God's goodness to sinners: that He might clear Himself at the great day as to those who shall perish.

There are a great many things wherein the willingness of God to be reconciled to sinners is further to be set forth. Yet I know there are objections that lie in your minds: "How can we

come? And if God is so willing, He may bring our hearts to be willing to be reconciled to Him.”

We shall discourse these more at large. But for the present I desire to present before you the manifestation of the goodness of God towards sinners to gain upon their hearts, that they might be reconciled unto Him. And I would be very sorry to open all these things in such a congregation as this if it were not to gain some souls. For it's likely enough that some will be hardened; and now if some should be hardened and others should not be gained, what a miserable thing would it be?

I might make this an evidence of how willing God is to be reconciled to sinners, that He would have the riches of His grace thus manifested to gain sinners to Himself, though He knows that it will be a means to harden others. He knows that it will cost the eternal damnation of many souls, and though He knows this, yet for all this God says, “Let my willingness to be reconciled be opened to poor sinners by the preaching of the gospel. Though it costs many souls very dearly, yet for the love I bear to poor souls let it be made known to the face of them all.”

Now if God were not strongly set to do good to souls, surely He would not venture the damnation of other souls so much. But, says God, “Let their souls go rather than My willingness to be reconciled unto others should not be declared unto them.”

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

The Eleventh Argument

*T*he next argument that shows the willingness of God to be reconciled to sinners is this: the Lord in His Word uses very powerful and strong arguments to draw the heart to come in to be reconciled. He does not merely offer mercy. He does not merely set before the souls His mercy, but the Lord labors with strong reasons, motives, and arguments to persuade and gain the hearts of sinners to come in to be reconciled to Him.

For example, when a man offers peace it is something, and when he does it in a generous, loving way of courtesy, that is more. But when He sends strong arguments to persuade, and will not readily take a denial, but sends such and such arguments, and considers beforehand what will be most likely to persuade the heart of such a man, asking, “What can I conceive will gain his heart most? What can I think?”

Suppose there has been a falling out between you and another man, and you know that when he is alone in his closet he is thinking thus with himself: “What arguments can I conceive may take the heart of such a man to persuade him to come in to be at peace with me? What can I think may be the most prevalent? That will I certainly use to persuade him.”

But undoubtedly it is so with God. God looks on the children of men and considers what argument will take their hearts most. The Scripture is exceedingly full of prevalent and powerful arguments to persuade the hearts of men to come in and be reconciled to God. These arguments are sometimes taken from the equity of God's ways towards them, and their unequal ways towards Him. "Are not my ways just," says God, "and your ways unjust? Is there anything that I require of you but righteousness? Do not I speak righteously?"

Sometimes He uses arguments from the absolute necessity that lies on sinners to come and be reconciled to God, showing them that certainly they will be lost, undone, and eternally damned if they do not come in. "He that believeth not, the wrath of God abides upon him" (John 3:36). You are lost and undone creatures unless you come in. And sometimes He uses arguments taken from the excellency of the benefit and profit that there is in coming in to God, and being reconciled unto all the glorious promises of the gospel; these are so many powerful arguments to draw the hearts of sinners to run in to be reconciled to God.

I might be very long in showing the particular arguments that God uses. But take this one full argument that we have to persuade sinners to come in: "Turn you at My reproof; behold I will pour My Spirit upon you; I will make known My word unto you" (Proverbs 1:23). He speaks here to simple ones, scorners, fools. "Turn you at My reproof; behold I will pour My Spirit out upon you," says God, as if God should say, "Though you are scorners, yet, the truth is, My heart works towards you. My heart yearns towards you, and if you would but turn to Me I would pour forth My heart to you. You shall have My very Spirit, My very heart let out unto you, if you will turn unto Me."


What an argument is here to prevail with the hardest hearts

in the world? God Himself comes and says to a sinner, to one who scorned Him and His ways, and to a fool who has gone on in ways of folly and wickedness—God comes and says to him, “O wretched sinner! Come in, come in, turn to Me, turn to Me. I will pour forth My heart to you. All those promises of giving rest to your soul, of giving life eternal, eternal salvation, glory, peace, and comfort, and a kingdom, shall all be made good to you.”

The Lord therefore suits Himself to us in such arguments, so close as may outbid other comforts that we have in the Word in any ways of sin. And therefore He tells them of honey, milk, raiment, gold, silver, and all such things are as precious in the eyes of men, such as are of esteem with us, and tenders His Son to us on such kind of notions that every one of them might be prevalent arguments to gain the hearts of sinners to come in to God. This is the way of God. He comes into the hearts of His people with the most prevalent arguments, such reasons as one would think were impossible to be refuted. I appeal to the hearts of those who have been acquainted with the work of God on them. How did God come to your hearts? Did He not come with mighty strong arguments to you? The devil tempted, and he came with strong arguments, but God also came and tempted with strong arguments. The devil draws and God draws. God’s mercies draw more strongly than the devil can. Oh, it was mercy to that soul, and (the truth is) when the Lord pleases to work effectually on the soul, He can present stronger arguments to draw the heart of a sinner to Him than it is possible for the devil to prevail against.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

The Twelfth Argument

nother sign of God's willingness is this: in answering all objections that lie in the hearts of sinners. Whatsoever objections lie in the hearts of sinners, God has ways to answer all those, and He does it in His Word and by His Spirit. For example, what would a sinner object? Suppose you object that you are unworthy of such mercies as God offers to you, and, therefore, it is unlikely that ever God will bestow that mercy on you. In Isaiah 55, God directly answers that objection that it may never hinder any sinner from coming in to Him. Says God, "Come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Note in one verse there is three times, "Come without money; he that has no money come and eat," and then, "Buy without money," and then, "Without price." What is the meaning of this? Here you are to know that the promises of the gospel are set out to you as wine, milk, and bread, by those things that are most delightful and most useful for the nature of man. The gospel is set out by such things, and so it is in Scripture by things that are the most excellent of all:

Sometimes by a kingdom: “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” There is the argument, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Sometimes by a marriage: when God sends to people to be reconciled, He sends to them with this argument: that it is to marry them to His Son.

Sometimes by a supper: God the Father invites to a supper where there are all kinds of dainties. The great King makes a supper at the marriage of His Son, and these are powerful arguments God uses.

“Oh, but I am unworthy,” says a poor soul. “What? that such a one as I, so vile, so wretched, and in every way unworthy, should have such things?”

This was the policy of the devil at first. The devil labors to make sinners fight the gospel, and set at naught the counsels of God. So you have it in Hebrews 10:29: “To account the blood of the covenant a common thing.” That is his first way.

But if he cannot prevail in that way, and if the Lord shines through all the mists and ill conceits of the gospel, and shows the soul the excellency and beauty of His Son, and the glorious things in the gospel, then the devil comes the other way. “Indeed,” says he, “there are glorious things, but you are unworthy; you are a wretched, base, vile creature, and can you think that God should grant such things as these to you?”

Now the Lord answers this objection: “Come without money.” What is that? That is, “Though you have no worthiness in yourself, though you have no abilities to buy anything that is good, yet come and close with My grace. That shall make you rich enough; you shall have money enough that way. Come without money and without price. Let never that objection hinder you that you are unworthy and unable to do anything.”

The Lord calls you without money and offers freely to you; and therefore in the latter end of the book of Revelation it is

said, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him that heareth say, 'Come.' And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). How shall I ever think to have it? It is free so that this objection cannot hinder.

OBJECTION. "Though the Lord requires nothing that I shall do beforehand, but will grant His mercy freely, yet when I am come, then perhaps hard things will be required at my hands. Oh, the ways of God are hard ways, and then I must live so strictly; then I must make conscience of my ways, and so abandon all my sins and lusts."

ANSWER. And what says the devil to a corrupt heart? "What? Will you leave all such pleasant ways, and be so straitly bound? Then you must do nothing but according to the Word of God and conscience; farewell to all the comforts and joys of your life if you come to be religious and godly."

These are the temptations that keep off the hearts of men. I appeal to you, have not some of your hearts been kept off from Jesus Christ and the ways of God merely upon some such temptations as these? And indeed, perhaps, at first, it may be so until the nature of a man is changed.

But mark how this objection is taken away when sinners are called to Christ: "Come unto Me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

That concerns the former time, but then afterwards, when Christ adds, "Take My yoke upon you, My burden." It seems then that we must be yoked and burdened. But mark what follows in verse 30: "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." It is as if Christ should say, "Never hearken to such a temptation of any difficulties in My ways. I assure you beforehand, you will find that the devil does but gall you and deceive you. I

will warrant you beforehand that I will lay no yoke upon you, but you shall find, when you come to bear it, that it is an easy yoke; and though it is a burden, yet you shall acknowledge it is a light burden.”

This I dare say in the name of God unto all: come in, all you who stand off from the ways of God. Though the ways of God may seem hard to you at first, yet I dare say from God to you that you will find the ways of God more easy to you at last than ever you did the ways of sin. For certainly there is more trouble in the ways of sin than can be in the ways of God. And when God calls on you to come in to be reconciled, He professes to you that He will require nothing of you but that which shall be more pleasant to you than any ways of sin that you lived in before. There are more comforts and joy, and that for the present, than ever you had in the ways of sin. Do but ask anyone who has made trial of this, and desire them to speak their consciences to you (I mean those who have any apprehension of the love of Christ toward them).

Yes, have you begun to walk in wisdom’s ways, which are pleasantness, and to tread in those paths which are strewn with roses and paved with peace? Pray, then, speak plainly, how do you find yourself? Is it not better now than it was before? Do you not find more ease, more comfort and joy in these ways of God than you did before in any way of sin? Oh, such persons will profess to you that they find more comfort than ever they did before. They find more sweetness in communion with God in His ways in one day than they found in the ways of sin in all their lives before.

The Holy Spirit, in pleading with the hearts of men, says the same: “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:17). If you believe the Spirit of God, the ways of godliness are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are

paths of peace. What should hinder you then? It is neither your unworthiness that can be any hindrance, nor the hardship of the way. These are the two great blocks that lie in the way, and God fully takes these away in Scripture.

If there is any other objection, I dare ask you to bring what objections you can, and give me but a little time to find out some manifest word or other in Scripture that shall meet with that very objection.

Then how does this argue God's exceeding willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It is as if a man sends his messenger to such a one to offer peace, and he thinks beforehand, "Oh, but he will have this and this objection against me, but," says he to his servant, who is employed in the business, "you shall answer this objection thus and the other objection thus."

The Thirteenth Argument

*A*nother evidence of God's willingness to be reconciled is that God is so importunate with sinners. He uses such strong arguments that he first takes away objections, and then He is so importunate that He does not merely satisfy Himself with offering mercy, but He is very importunate in the work. The importunity of God appears, first, in that the Scripture expresses God crying out after sinners—not only seeking after sinners, but calling and crying. So the words in the original are of God's beseeching to be reconciled, of God calling to sinners. In Proverbs 1:20–21 it is said of wisdom that it cries. And then the Lord cries out in Isaiah 55.

When He makes a proclamation, He begins first with, "Ho!" Yes, "Ho! every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and He that has no money," and there is the offer of Christ with proclamation.

Further, God's importunity is manifest in that He repeats Himself over again; He is not content with expressing Himself once, but He does it again and again and again. In Isaiah 55:1, see how many times there is crying: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye; and he that hath no money, come," and

“come” the third time. Three times in verse 1 God says “come” to sinners; and then in the third verse: “Incline your ear, and come unto Me and hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.” There is another promise: “even the sure mercies of David.” So hear in one short Scripture four times the word “come.” Oh, how importunate is God with sinners! God does not do with us as commonly we do with Him. God seeks after sinners more earnestly than sinners seek after God. Thus we seek God for mercy; we pray to God for mercy. We content ourselves with praying once, and seldom look after our prayers to see what becomes of them. But God cries to us to come, and if we do not come the first time then He cries, “Come, come, come”—three times together. We are ready to think that if our petitions are repeated twice in prayer, it is repetitious; this shows the earnestness of the Spirit of God, that He is exceedingly willing.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

The Fourteenth Argument

Another evidence is this: when sinners do not come, yet the Lord leaves them not. He then appeals to the very consciences of sinners and deals with them in that way; and that is very powerful. He deals with sinners in that way to break their hearts. When, after all His arguments, they come not in, then the Lord appeals to their own consciences, and then pleads with them, in a way of appealing to their consciences, why they should not come in and yield to Him. And this way is very powerful to prevail with sinners.

If you would go and prevail with anyone for a thing you desire to accomplish, what course do you take? Either you send for them or go to them, and then you open the case to them; or, if you go to them and yet they are not moved, then you bring powerful arguments to persuade them. If that does not move them, then you take away all their objections; and if that does not prevail on them, then you importune them; and if that does not overcome them, what is the next way you take? Then you appeal to their own consciences. Then say you, “No, I appeal to your own conscience whether I have said it or not. I will even leave it to your conscience, and judge it in the presence of God. Let your own conscience be your judge.” And sometimes this

prevails more than all the arguments in the world, when you appeal to a man's own conscience that He deals unfairly and poorly, that he does not yield.

But God does this: He appeals to men's consciences. I will give you some Scriptures for it. "Put Me in remembrance" (Isaiah 43:26). Says God, "Let us plead together; declare that you must be justified; come, let us hear what you can say; let us plead together; declare you that you may be justified; declare it, say what you can, try whether you or I be in the right way; I will even be contented to leave it to you."

But Jeremiah 2 seems to be fuller; there you have often expressions of God's pleading with His people: first in verse 9, and then two more times in this chapter the Lord says He will plead. In verse 29, you have it again: "Wherefore will you plead with Me?" And in verse 35: "Behold I will plead with you," says God. But now in His pleading, He will appeal to the very consciences of men, and that you have in Ezekiel 18:25: "Yet you say, the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear, O house of Israel." It is as if He should say, "Conscience, answer! Is not My way just?"

Will not your own consciences answer you thus, that His ways are just? The Lord is content to plead with His people, and He concludes His pleading by leaving it to their consciences, to the people, as He does often.

God comes by His Spirit in the ministry of His Word. I appeal to you, has He not often done so? He says, "Do you think in your very consciences that these ways that you walk in are right? And My ways, are they good?"

Is it any way just that wretched sinful creatures should take liberty to go on all their days, and please themselves in the lusts of their vain hearts, and now, when they can sin no more nor longer, that they should cry to God for mercy, and that then He should pardon and accept them into His favor? Is this just?

Is not the Lord infinitely more worthy of all the strength you have, if it were ten thousand times more than it is, than that you should have given it up to your lusts and vanities? Conscience, speak whether God is most worthy of all! And what were you made for? To no other end but merely to eat and drink and satisfy your flesh, and have your lusts here for awhile? Do you think in your conscience that God intended no other end for you when He sent you into the world?

You have been upon your sickbeds and cried to God, and have promised God better obedience. Now are your ways just, when you take liberty to sin after God has thus delivered you, and after God has preserved your life when you were at the very brink of death, and death was ready to deliver you up to the hands of eternal misery? And do you think that God's end in preserving your life was that you might have more time to sin against Him, and might spend the latter part of your strength in bringing dishonor to His name? Was this God's end in preserving your life? God might have struck you one blow more and sent you down to eternal misery, and then God would have had no more dishonor of you, but would have had the glory of His justice upon you. Now do you think that this is why God preserved you, that you should have more years added to your life so that you should have more time to sin against Him?

This argues God's willingness to be reconciled, that the Lord is thus pleading with you. And let me speak to everyone in this place who has felt God pleading thus with them. Know that the Lord, by this work of His, strives with you to bring you to be reconciled to Him. This is nothing other than the striving of the Spirit of God Himself with you, though perhaps you think this is troublesome to you. Many men and women, when they have their consciences pleading thus, think it is troublesome. Oh, wretched man or woman that you are, this work of conscience

is nothing but God pleading with you to save your soul. You have stood against His Word which has been preached to you, and now God seeks you, the other way; by His Spirit He appeals to your own conscience, so that you may be brought in to be reconciled to Him. But when God has no mind to be reconciled, then says God to conscience, "Let him alone," and then the sinner goes on with a hard heart and blesses himself that his conscience is quiet. Oh, no, no; conscience is quiet, but God has left laboring any more with you.

The Fifteenth Argument

Further, the Lord shows His willingness to be reconciled to sinners in that, when this way will not prevail, and you think there will never be another way to be found, yet there is another way: God deals in a familiar way as man to man. When He brings His arguments, answers objections, is importunate, and pleads, then truly, sometimes (if it is a tender-hearted man), perhaps His heart breaks within Him, and He is ready to burst out with tears because of the stoutness and frowardness of such a one who will ruin himself and stand out against so much reason; and that prevails more than all the other arguments, especially when He is to speak to one whom He has any reference to.

A father, perhaps, persuades his child and answers what the child asks. He is importunate, appealing to the conscience of the child, yet the child stands out stubbornly; and at length the father or mother can hold no longer, but bursts out in tears, lamenting the hardness of heart of such a one. Now if a child who is stubborn should look in at a keyhole and see his father or mother shedding tears because of his hardness of heart, then the child will certainly be convinced of this: "Now certainly my father loves me, and all he does is but for my good." Certainly

thus did Christ: when He came to Jerusalem He wept over it. Upon what ground? “Oh, that you had known in this your day the things that concern your peace. Oh, that you have known!” (Luke 19:42). And Christ fell weeping.

Now we are to know that the tears of Christ then concern sinners now, as verily and truly as they concerned sinners at that very instant. And we are to look on Christ’s carriage of Himself to sinners in former times as at this instant concerning us and among us.

Now I appeal to you: suppose Christ were born in this world in the flesh again as He was, and should come and look towards this commonwealth, and should come here and say, “O, England, England, oh, that you had known the things that concern your peace,” and should weep over London or Westminster as He did over the city of Jerusalem. Would not this break our hearts? Would we not take this as a great argument that Christ was very desirous of the peace of this city?

Now the same is true concerning every particular soul. Every one of us should make use of that Scripture, and apply it to ourselves, as if Christ stood weeping over us and said, “Oh, that you knew at least in this your day the things that concern your peace!” Would not this break your hearts? Christ sends His gospel to this town!

Suppose you could see Christ bodily, Jesus Christ standing here, with one tear trickling down after another, saying, “Oh, if these people only knew the things that concern their peace, at least in this their day when they have a price put into their hands, before the gospel sun goes down, or is eclipsed.” Surely we would say that Christ’s tears argue the howling of His bowels towards them! It may be that their time will not continue long. Oh, that they knew it now!

If you saw Christ thus weeping, I suppose this would be a

mighty argument to you that Christ was willing to be reconciled to you. We are, I say, to make use of that Scripture as if it were now. And though Christ does not shed tears now in heaven, yet there is as much compassion in the heart of Christ now as ever there was here upon earth. He has lost no compassion by going to heaven, and therefore know that Jesus Christ looks this day upon this congregation. And He eyes many particular souls more especially, and says in His very heart, "Oh, that such a soul, such a servant, such a youth, oh, that they did but know the things that concern their peace, for now the gospel is opened to them, and a day of salvation is made known to them, and they are labored upon to be drawn from their evil ways to embrace Me. Oh, that they knew these things that concern their peace."

And thus it appears how willing God is to be reconciled. I shall later show something about Christ in a more special manner, which shows that sinners should come and be reconciled to God.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

The Sixteenth Argument

*F*urther, there is another evidence of the willingness of God to be reconciled to sinners. The Lord foresees that, after He has done all to be reconciled to sinners (let Him do what He can, He shall have what little honor for the present, at least in this world, by them), after they are brought in, yet still there will be an abundance of corruption and they will dishonor God extremely now and grieve the Holy Spirit who thus draws them. He sees that they will walk more offensively and, it may be, scandalously towards their brethren, and dishonor the profession of religion. God sees how much ado and stir He shall have with those whom He brings in to Himself, and yet, for all this, He goes on with His work and labor with the hearts of sinners, notwithstanding all that He foresees.

And then, the last argument of all is this: after the Lord has used all these means to bring sinners to come in, and breaks their hearts that they might be reconciled to Him, yet the Lord is content to wait a long time upon sinners, and not to take advantage against them for their rejecting the grace that He offers them. The Scripture I named before is sufficient for that: “And, therefore, will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious” (Isaiah 30:18). Oh, how many years has the Lord

waited upon some of you? We have cause to stand and admire the grace of God, that ever He would once offer mercy to us, and that, after so many offers and such importunities to prevail with our hearts, and after we frowardly have rejected this grace, now God should wait upon us to heal our souls and at length to overcome us. Oh, this manifests the goodness of God and the tenderness of His heart to be willing to be reconciled to sinners. And therefore, in Jeremiah 13:27, mark what God says to sinners: "I have seen thy adulteries, and thy neighings, and the lewdness of thy whoredoms, and thy abominations; woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?" Oh, that once it might be.

God says, "I am content to stay again and again. Oh, when shall that once be? Let not all My labor be in vain." Oh, here is the fullness of the expressions of God, and Isaiah 57:17-18 is observable for this purpose: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him." Though he went on, and was wroth, says God, "yet I have seen his ways and will heal him. I will not take advantage. I will be content after all their froward rejections of all the offers of grace, yet I will heal them for all that."

The frowardness is that which has reference not only to unprofitableness under afflictions, but also when one is dealt kindly with, and does not answer according to his kindness but will have his own will, such a one goes on frowardly.

Now, then, if we could put all these together that have been named of God's willingness towards sinners, to bring them in to be reconciled to Him, oh, Lord, how infinite would the grace and goodness of God appear! How would God be glorified in His grace!

I see I cannot possibly come to these things that I have heretofore propounded, as to why God does all this and the like; but some explanation must be given, or the reasons why God does deal thus must be shown. So a word or two at this time for why God does all this: why does God deal thus with sinners in such a manner?

First, it is because mercy pleases Him. In Micah 7:18 God makes a large promise of pardon of sin because mercy pleases Him. Now that which is pleasing to any creature the creature loves to do, and loves to do it to the full, to the height. All pleasure, you know, is for the creature to enjoy; to eat and drink and sport is very pleasing to a voluptuous man, and therefore he desires to have this to the full. A large bag of gold pleases a covetous man; therefore he is never satisfied, but would have it to the full. Honor pleases an ambitious man, and therefore he never has enough. So mercy pleases God, and therefore (as I may with holy reverence speak) God scarcely thinks He has ever done enough to show the riches of His grace.

Second, God does it because the blood of His Son cries continually in His ears for mercy; and it is of such infinite worth and value, and the obedience of His Son in shedding His blood has been so acceptable to God, that whomsoever this blood is pleaded for, the Lord must grant it to the utmost. Now it is the blood of Jesus Christ that is shed for sinners, that pleads with God the Father, that all this mercy might be shown.

It is said in the Scripture that the blood of Christ speaks better things than the blood of Abel. The blood of Abel cries aloud for vengeance: "Vengeance, Lord, against sinners." But the blood of Christ cries aloud, "Mercy, mercy, Lord, for sinners," and God hears the cry of His Son's blood: "What is this that cries, 'The blood of My Son for mercy for sinners'? Let them have mercy, yes, let them have mercy to the full." Then the floodgates

of mercy come to be opened. If it were not for the blood of Christ, the patience of God would let out some common favors. But when God comes to satisfy the cries of the blood of Christ for mercy, says God, "Open all the floodgates now, and let in streams of mercy for sinners. Let mercy be shown to the highest degree that can be. If the blood of My Son cries for it (though it requires wonderful mercy), great, rich, glorious mercy must be given; it is not a drop that is needed, but a sea of mercies to answer it."

"Aye, but," says God, "the blood of My Son cries for mercy, and though there is need of an infinite ocean of mercy to cleanse the soul of such a sinner, it must needs be granted because the blood of My Son cries for it." When you find God manifesting Himself to your souls in ways of mercy, it comes from the blood of Jesus Christ that cries to God the Father for mercy to be bestowed on you.

And this is the sum and substance of all these expressions of God's grace toward sinners. We think it very strange that ever such an infinite God should condescend to sinners. But when we come to examine the reason, we need not wonder at it. We see now from where it all comes: it springs all from the ever living fountain of the unsearchable, rich grace of God in Christ, though (at the very reading) we may wonder that ever God should do so. And perhaps some men may think it is only the strains of ministers that make it so. But when we come to understand the bottom, the ground of all, then we must acknowledge the reality of it. No wonder if God shows mercy to such souls, so unworthy and so vile. Why? Because the blood of His Son cries for mercy.

*Christ's Willingness to
Be Reconciled to Sinners
Further Opened*

Before we come to answer the objections, or to any applications, there is yet something more to be opened to you.

“As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in *Christ's* stead.” As the heart of God is so set upon being reconciled to sinners, so is Jesus Christ. It is true, Christ is God, but Christ and God are here spoken of individually. Christ is the same God with the Father, but He is God and man, God incarnate, God the Mediator between the Father and us. So it will be exceedingly useful to show how the heart of Christ is set upon reconciling sinners to God, for the apostle comes in the name of Christ as well as of God the Father.

Now the fact that the heart of Christ is in it appears in the understanding of the great work of reconciliation. He has undertaken it, and He has willingly done so. Certainly, if Christ had not been so set upon this work, to bring sinners to be reconciled to the Father, He would never have undertaken such a work which He knew would prove so difficult to Him;

and He knew what it would cost Him. But yet He undertook it willingly and delightfully, and for that compare these Scriptures. “Then said I, ‘Lo, I come: in the volume of thy book it is written of Me’” (Psalm 40:7). The context begins in verse 6: “Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire, mine ears Thou didst open; burnt offering and sin offering Thou didst not require. Then said I, ‘Lo, I come: in the volume of Thy book it is written of Me; I delight to do Thy will O God.’” It is a psalm of Christ, a prophecy of Him, and that it is of Him appears plainly if you compare the Scripture with Hebrews 10:5–7. There the apostle quotes this very text (with only a little difference in the wording).

Now there are several things to be observed of Christ in His willingness to come and undertake the great work of making atonement between God and sinners. “Mine ears hast Thou opened” is the first. “Lo, I come,” and then, “I delight to do Thy will,” and “Thy law is within My heart.” There are these four.

“Lo, I come,” says Christ, “to do it.” It appears plainly that there was a covenant between the Father and the Son from all eternity, that Christ should come in due time into the world and take our natures upon Him. Now the time was for Christ to come. There are many who will agree to do such a thing beforehand, but when it comes to be done (if they see there will be any difficulty in it, and that they shall endure some hardship) they hang back. But Christ had agreed from all eternity with His Father that at such a time He would come into the world and take the nature of man upon Him, be in the form of a servant, and be made a curse for man’s sins—and all that He might reconcile sinners to Himself. This was the agreement.

Now the time approached for Him to come and undertake this great work. When the time came, observe now how Christ’s heart was in it. He did not hang back. He did not regret

the covenant but said, "I come, I come." We usually express ourselves, when we are called to do a thing that we love to do, in this way: "I come, I come."

It is as if God said to Christ, "Now the time is come for You to do that which You undertook to do: to go into the world, to take the nature of man, to be made in the form of a servant and to bear My wrath, and to satisfy My justice for the sin of man."

"I come, I come," says Christ, and He not only comes, but comes with delight to do God's will. What was this will? It was that Christ would be humbled to the death of the cross. "Though I knew it would cost My life, yet I delight to do it because My heart is so much set upon reconciling sinners to God. And not only so, but 'Thy law is in My heart.' It has made a deep impression in My heart, that is, that law of Thine whereby I am tied to that which I have undertaken; for it is within My heart, in the very midst of My bowels, that I should do it."

He says, "Mine ears hast Thou opened." The words literally are, "Mine ears have you bored." The meaning of that phrase must be understood by God's way in the time of the law (commanding that, if a servant would not go out of his service in the years of Jubilee, his master should take an awl and bore his ear and so he should be a servant forever). This phrase has allusion to that, as if Christ should say, "I am content, that I might do this work, to be as a servant whose ear is bored, who must be a servant forever. That I might accomplish the work of reconciling sinners to Thyself, I am content to be as a servant whose ear is bored." Thereby He signified that He would be willing to listen to anything that should be commanded Him. His Master's commandments are not grievous, but it is His meat and drink to do the will of His Lord.

Well might the apostle say, "As in Christ's stead we beseech you." It is as if he should say, "Christ's heart is much toward

sinner that He might bring them to be reconciled to God, and we in His name come to prevail with sinners to get them to God.”

Second, observe what was the first sermon that ever Christ preached. “For the kingdom of heaven is at hand”—that was the first sermon, calling sinners to repent because the kingdom of grace, wherein the gospel of God should reign, is at hand. Christ would preach so as to gain the most when He had the greatest audience. What was it that He preached? When He was among the Jews at the Feast of Dedication, in the great day of the Feast, Christ lifted up His voice, and cried, “Ho, everyone that is athirst.”

When a minister is to preach to a great congregation, and he is not likely to come to them again, he speaks on such a subject that his heart is most in. Now Christ, at the Feast of Dedication, was not likely to come to them again soon, to use such an argument to them. He cried, “Ho, everyone that is athirst, come.” And Christ further professed that it is the end why He came into the world: “To seek, and to save that which was lost. Not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” That is the great end why He came into the world; it was the great subject of His preaching, the great errand for which He came into the world.

And further observe with what love, gentleness, and sweetness He does it. What a gracious invitation we have in Matthew 11:28: “Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He professes: “None that comes to Me will I cast off” (John 6:37).

“I will not cast off any who come to Me.” Yes, Christ tells us that He “will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed” (Matthew 12:20). To encourage sinners, He tells them if there are but any stirrings of the heart to Him, as the smoking flax and the bruised reed, yet He will not break one nor

quench the other. Rather, He will encourage new beginnings, though never so small, in sinners coming to Him. These are the expressions of Christ towards sinners to show them how tender He is over them.

And when the time drew near for Christ to suffer, then if ever one would think (as if the heart of Christ were not much in it) Christ would draw back, it might be not only when He was to come into the world, but in the work of His mediation, when He was to suffer the violence of the wrath of His Father to be poured out upon Him. But mark how He expresses Himself in Luke 22:15: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

Why did Christ desire that? He desired, that is, strongly desired to eat this Passover because He knew that as soon as He had eaten it, He would be called to suffer for man's sin, and to accomplish the great work of redemption for sinful man. Then it was to be done.

Why? Was there any such cause that Christ should so strongly desire this Passover? One would have thought that above all Passovers Christ would have been afraid of this one, because this was to put a period to His life. For then Christ was Himself to be made the Passover to suffer. When this Passover came, He knew that He was to be made the Paschal Lamb, and yet He desired above all to eat this Passover. Thereby He showed what a mind He had to finish the work whereby sinners might come to be reconciled to God.

There is another expression: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am straitened till it be accomplished?" (Luke 12:50). Christ was exercised in His heart until the work was done. You may see how much the heart of Christ was in it to be reconciled to sinners when He came to do the thing indeed, when the wrath of God was even just coming upon Him. Then

(as nature had some kind of reluctance) He said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me," to show how sensible His human nature was of it. But he added, "Not My will, but Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39). And the Scripture tells us that He made His soul an offering for sin, and that He laid down His life.

And further, after Christ had laid down His life and risen again, mark one expression more that shows how willing Christ is to have sinners reconciled and brought in unto the Father to be at peace with Him. Note the first preaching of Christ: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So, here in this world when (in His bodily presence) He gave his last sermon, what was it He said to them? Luke 24:46 is very remarkable, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer." And verses 47-48: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name amongst all nations beginning at Jerusalem, and ye are witnesses of these things." And then by and by He was caught up into heaven. That which I note this Scripture for is that after Christ had been so notoriously abused in His sufferings, yet this did not hinder His earnest thirsting after reconciliation for those who had put Him to death and had so abused Him. Says He, "It is written, that it behoved Christ to suffer, beginning at Jerusalem. And that is what I would have done, so that repentance should be preached to all nations, but begin at Jerusalem."

Why begin at Jerusalem? Because Jerusalem was the place where Christ was put to death. Immediately before this He was crowned with thorns, mocked, a reed put into His hands, spit upon. They released Barabbas rather than Him, and they cried, "Away with Him." They carried Him to the cross, and there nailed Him until He was dead. Thus they dealt with Christ there, yet Christ would have repentance preached to

all nations. Said He, "Above all, think of Jerusalem; begin at Jerusalem. Let them have it in the first place, Jerusalem that took away My life, that killed Me." If anything in the world could take off the heart of Christ from being reconciled to sinners, one would have thought that it was what they had done to Him at Jerusalem, but He would have them *begin* at Jerusalem.


It is a notable text of Scripture to us, and you shall find that the most remarkable conversion and bringing in of sinners was at the sermon of Peter, when Peter charged them with crucifying Christ. This was the most famous conversion that ever was made of those people who put Christ to death; the most famous work of God's reconciling sinners to Himself, of Christ bringing in sinners by the preaching of the gospel, was the bringing in of those sinners. And also, in the last sermon that Christ preached from heaven, like His first sermon on earth and His last sermon on earth, and like the most solemn sermon that was at the dedication of the temple, is altogether about bringing in sinners to be reconciled to God. This last sermon that He preached from heaven, or that ever He will preach until He comes again, is in Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the Bride said, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst say, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'"

These are the last words in effect, at the conclusion of the book, that ever Christ would speak until He came to judgment. Never would He speak more in that way to the children of men until He came in a new world. But note His last expression: "Let him that is athirst, and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

And now we will answer objections.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

*Objections Answered
concerning the Willingness
of God and Christ to Be
Reconciled to Sinners*

BJECTION. You will say, “Why should God and Christ do all this? You tell us that God is so willing to be reconciled, and has so expressed Himself; and Christ is so willing to be reconciled, and has so expressed Himself by entreating and beseeching. But both God and Christ know that we can do nothing of ourselves; and therefore to what end is all this that you have spoken? If we should go to Golgotha or some burial place and entreat the dead to rise out of their graves, to what purpose would it be? We are dead in sins and trespasses, and now, if we can do nothing, all that you have spoken is but to little purpose.”

To that I answer, first, though it is true that we are dead in sins and trespasses, and are not able to perform any true, saving work by our own strength, yet all those expressions of God and Christ in His Word, and so of the ministers of God in

their names, may be of use to stir up common gifts and graces of the Spirit of God in us; and that is to have them stirred up to the utmost that possibly may be. People must not think that because they cannot do any work that is indeed saving in itself, any work of spiritual life, therefore, there is nothing to be done by them. We are to know that though the saving work of God is more rare, yet there are common works of the Spirit that God dispenses to many, yea, to most, and in some degree or other to all, especially those who live under the sound of the gospel.

There are none who live under the sound of the gospel but have some common gifts of the Spirit of God in one degree or other. Now the Lord would have these stirred up to the utmost, though it cannot be in a sanctified way, and these expressions of God and Christ to sinners have a great deal of efficacy in them to stir up what common gifts of God's Spirit you have; and if sinners do not do this they cannot expect that God should do much towards them.

Consider what power God has given them, and what common gifts they have already, and let that be used to the utmost and then they may wait still for more from God. It is true that there are none who perish but God has this to charge them with, that they did not stir up the common gifts of God's Spirit.

Second, though we cannot do anything of ourselves, yet God knows that this preaching of reconciliation is the best way to convey true, saving grace and a spirit of life to us. The Lord chooses this way rather than others. "You have received the Spirit," said Paul to the Galatians, "and how have you received it? By the preaching of the law or by the preaching of the gospel?" (Galatians 3:2). Which way was the conveyance of the Spirit of God to you? Was it by the preaching of the law or the preaching of the gospel? Not by the one, but by the other.

Though there is a great deal of value in preaching the law,

yet that which conveys the Spirit and grace into the conscience is the opening of the riches of the treasure of the grace of God in the gospel. Therefore this objection has no strength in it: "We have no power in ourselves." God entreats and beseeches because, by this means, He puts forth a power into the hearts of those He intends to save everlastingly. If we should entreat dead men to rise, it would be folly for us, because we cannot convey any power into them; but it is not in vain for God because He is able, while He is entreating and beseeching, to convey a power into them.

OBJECTION. But you say, in the second place, "What need does the Lord have to do all this? God might work it in a word from Himself. God might presently show forth His almighty power to bring in sinners to Himself. He need not stand praying and entreating and answering objections, bringing arguments and the like, because He can, by His almighty power, bring in sinners. He can break the stoutest heart that lives upon the earth and pull down the proudest spirit; and, therefore, what need is there for God to do all this?"

ANSWER. I answer, who are you, O man, who reasons against God? But if you must have reasons, there are many to be given.

First, because God, having to work with a rational creature, will work suitably to the nature of the creature He is working upon. If God were to work merely upon stones, to raise out of the stones children unto Abraham, then God would but only speak the word and say, "Let it be done," and it will be done. But the Lord loves to do it in a way suitable to a rational creature.

Now that way is this: the understanding should be enlightened, and the heart should be gained and wrought upon. Once they have this knowledge, the heart should come to do what it does freely and willingly. Though we have no free will

at first, yet, when we embrace the gospel, then the Lord causes the hearts of men to embrace it willingly, and this is a great part of the gospel of God, to show Himself to His creature. He will work His own work, but in such a way as shall be suitable to His creature. Again, if the Lord should bring in sinners to Himself by His almighty power, then there would not appear so much of the beauty and riches of His grace as there does in this way. If God should effectually work by His own hand, the glory of His grace would not so gloriously shine forth.

Now it is God's special design in all His works about redemption that the glory of the riches of His grace might appear to men and angels so that they might magnify it. Now what can more magnify grace than when a sinner shall come to view the several workings of God's mercy towards Him, how the Lord has provided a way of reconciliation, and that, though the soul was backward and hung off, yet the Lord still followed on and worked on the soul, and would not suffer the soul to die and perish in its sins? What will magnify grace more than this? The way of bringing sinners to be reconciled to Himself will be a principal subject for the saints to be blessing God to all eternity. And therefore, you Christians who have found the work of God bringing in your hearts to Himself, observe what God's work is; mark the several ways of God's working with your souls! For know that those several ways of God's working in your souls now will be the subject of your eternal praises in heaven.

And hence it is that God goes on in such varied expressions, that the riches of His grace might appear the more fully; yea, and further, that by this means He might gain the hearts of sinners everlastingly to Himself. There is nothing that will gain them so unto God as this declaration of the riches of His grace in the gospel. And when the sinner shall see not only that God is reconciled, but how God has set His heart on it, how earnest

God has been in it, this will engage the heart of a sinner forever to God. And hence it is that those sinners who have most felt the grace of God bringing them in to be reconciled are those who keep closest to God. As for such as are only stopped in the way of their sins by the terrors of the law, and are not acquainted with the mystery of the grace of God in the gospel, they seldom hold out, though for a while out of slavery to their consciences they do not commit such and such sins. This much, I am certain, one may be brought to do who has no true saving grace. They may not dare to commit a sin in secret for awhile merely out of terror of conscience, but now these men are only wrought upon by the terrors of the law. They seldom hold out, but, though conscience bears a strong hand to keep them from sin for a long time, yet at length they break those bonds.

But now, those who have not only conscience enlightened, and do not see the danger of sin only, but come to have these beams of the grace and goodness of God let out into their hearts—their hearts are so gained to God by this that they will never depart from Him. But their hearts will follow to the bountifulness of God.

The difference between these two may be expressed by this similitude. Look how it is in frosty weather when the water is frozen. There are two ways to come by the water. The husbandman goes in the morning and, seeing the water frozen, beats it to pieces and breaks the ice. But though he does so, the next morning he comes and sees it as frozen as much as before. But when warm weather comes and dissolves the ice, then it quite goes away in flakes. So the hearts of all sinners are frozen; and God comes with the terror of the law and beats them in pieces and breaks them that way. But at last they freeze again and grow as hard again as ever. But when the Lord comes with the beams of His grace and shines upon

them, then their hearts thaw and the ice goes away, and their hearts come flowing to God in another manner than when He comes by His strokes.

Now because the Lord sees that this is such a way to engage the hearts of sinners to come in to Him, therefore He not only puts forth such an almighty power, but comes in such a way as this, where the sinner is not able to perceive the hand of God, the almighty power that does the work. Yet the sinner can perceive the shining of God's grace, His goodness, the expressions of His love, and the like. This is placed before the eyes of the sinner to admire, and works upon the heart while the other means is more secret.

OBJECTION. If God and Christ are so willing to be reconciled to sinners, then you will say, "What is the reason that there are no more reconciled? One would think that all sinners in the world would be reconciled to Him, that He would reconcile all. Is it not as easy for God to reconcile one as well as another? God many times tells us that few shall be saved. Yes, Christ Himself tells us so. Now, considering what you have preached about God and Christ's willingness to be reconciled, one would think that all the world would come in to be reconciled. Otherwise, how will it appear that They are so willing?"

ANSWER. The heart of God and Christ are much set upon reconciliation with sinners, but so as may be suitable to the other ends that God has. God will not have the work of His mercy manifested so as it shall cross any other work that He has to do. As far as the glory of His mercy may be manifested without crossing some other work God has to do, so far it is let out and not to all. Why? Because it will not be suitable to some other ends that God has to bring about, that He should be reconciled to all sinners.

OBJECTION. You will say, "To other ends? Why? Do God's ends cross one another? If God's heart is for reconciliation with sinners, how should this cross any other thing that God has to do?"

ANSWER. Though things may seem to us to cross one another, yet there is a blessed concord in God's ends and ways; and it will appear plainly one day before the children of men and angels, and it will be the great work of God hereafter to manifest that those things which seem most to be cross one to another will in fact be very advantageous and will assist the promotion and coronation of this blessed work.

This is as it is in the heavens. There is the motion of the heavens; they have one motion by which they are carried one way. And there are the stars; they have another particular motion of their own, and yet there is a concord in the motions of the heavens.

In a clock, there is one wheel that runs one way so far, and then another meets with it; and they seem to run in quite contrary ways. Yet take them together and they all run to the end that the work is intended for, yet seeming to go contrary. The contrary movement of the wheels leads to the right movement of the clock.

So God seems to work in the works of His grace one way, and in the works of His justice another way; and they seem to go quite contrary one to the other. But the truth is, they all work to the end that the workman makes it for. Here are the grace and mercy of God manifested in entreating and beseeching sinners to be reconciled. Grace goes thus far, and then, when it has had its ends, comes the stroke of God's justice. That strikes another way, and all leads to the beauty of the work of God, so that He might have glory in all. So, even though God is so earnest, yet it is no argument that all sinners should be reconciled, because it will appear to be the beauty of God's work which shall appear

another day—the work of mercy thus far, and the work of justice so far. This we are not able to understand thoroughly now, but it is left to the great day to be understood.

Further, it may be answered that these expressions are chiefly intended towards those who belong to His eternal election, but are revealed in such a general way that none should exclude himself. Therefore, the charge of the ministers of the gospel is to preach to every creature, because we do not know who they are who belong to the election; but it is for the sake of God's elect ones that these things are reconciled in such a full way as they are.

Such things should be taught in a congregation where there are many thousands. But if there are but a few who belong to the election of grace, God aims at them most. Though He may aim at the other too to lessen their sins, and sometimes to aggravate them, yet know that if there are but a few, it is for you, and for your sake, that these things are preached. And these may serve to answer those objections.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

*Use 1: Admire God's Infinite
Grace in Entertaining to Be
Reconciled to Sinners*

1. What it is God entreats for
2. Who is entreated
3. By whom you are entreated
4. What need has God of you?

*W*ith regard to all that has been said about the willingness of God and Christ to be reconciled to sinners, that they thus entreat sinners, we are taught, first, to stand and admire the infinite riches of the grace of God, and especially you who have felt this work of God effectually upon your hearts. You have found God wooing and pursuing your hearts. Give God the glory of His grace and admire it.

It would be mercy for the Lord once to offer upon any terms to be reconciled to sinners, or to show them any favor. Merely to offer it is grace; it is to be admired, and it is more than God has done for the angels. He would not do so much to

them. But now that God should not only offer, but send to seek you, to cry after you again and again, to be importunate with you, to entreat and beseech not only by His ministers, but by His own Spirit (for there is the work of that too, as the Spirit of God comes and woos and beseeches sinners to come in and be reconciled)—oh, stand and admire this forever!

Let it take up your hearts to give glory to Him, and especially if you consider these four things:

1. What it is that God entreats and beseeches for? What is it that you are entreated to do? You are entreated to do that which shall deliver you from the greatest evil that any creature is capable of, and that whereby you would receive the greatest good that any creature is capable of. You are entreated not to be miserable, but to be happy, and not only that you should serve God, and not sin against God, and do the works that God requires of you for His glory, but you are entreated to be reconciled, to deliver your souls from the depth of misery and be brought to happiness and glory.

2. Consider who you are who are entreated. Were there any great worth in you, then you might expect to be entreated as men who are of great estates must be entreated. But who are you, wretched cowards? In yourselves you are damned dust and ashes, firebrands of hell, such as have made yourselves fuel for the everlasting wrath of the eternal God to burn upon, such as deserve to be cast out as an everlasting curse; enemies to God. Yet you are entreated.

3. And by whom are you entreated? Even by God Himself, and Christ, who is God blessed forever; even that infinite glory whom angels adore and before whom they cover their faces; even Him who by one word of His mouth is able to send you all presently down to hell. This God comes to entreat, and that

Christ whom angels adore, even that Christ comes to entreat. For the servant to entreat his master, for the subject to entreat the prince, is not so much; but for the master to entreat the servant, for the prince to entreat the subject, this is that which should fill our souls with a spirit of admiration at the unspeakable considerations of the most blessed majesty.

4. What need has God of you? Though you should perish and die eternally, it is no great matter to Him. God might have His glory out of your eternal ruin. But to the end that He might break your hearts, therefore He entreats and beseeches. Oh, admire the riches of His grace, and give Him the glory that is due to Him. Begin to do here what you must do to all eternity when you come into His glorious presence in heaven.

CHAPTER EIGHTY

Uses 2 and 3

USE 2. The more God manifests His grace, the more desperately wicked is the heart of man to stand out against God. Oh, wretched, cursed heart that can stand out against God, that can stand out against the offer of grace in the gospel! I say, this is a cursed heart that stands out against the offer of grace. If it should be declared that Christ has come into the world to save sinners, God expects that all those to whom Christ is so revealed should come flocking to Him, and cry mightily to God for mercy in Christ. But when God not only offers His Son, but comes by the ministry of His Word and by the work of His Spirit to draw your hearts to Him, if you stand out against God, against all these gracious beginnings, drawings, and melting expressions of God—oh, cursed, stubborn, hard heart that should stand out against all these!

You cannot now plead: “Oh, temptation was strong to draw my heart from God to such and such sinful ways.”

Was temptation strong? Why did temptation draw more alluringly than God has drawn alluringly by His gospel? It is impossible that the devil, and all the world, should draw more alluringly to any sin than God draws to Himself. Oh, these entreatings of God, this gracious way toward sinners, will be the

greatest aggravation of the sins of men that ever was or can be imagined. Only (for the present) know this much: the mercies of God, which shall be the subject of the saints rejoicing and blessing His name for all eternity will be your greatest misery. And that is a sad thing for any sinner to think on, that that mercy which the saints shall be eternally admiring and blessing God for should be their misery, secret wound, and greatest terror.

USE 3. Oh, rebuke your own wretched heart that has stood out so long against God as you have done all your days! Certainly the consideration of this—of standing out against any command of God—when God comes to enlighten a man’s conscience, and the soul comes to understand with whom he has to deal, has a mighty power to break the heart of man. When you come to see that you have stood out against all those loving drawings, all those wooings of the gospel, it is that which will rend your hearts: “Rend your hearts and not your garments, for the Lord is merciful” (Joel 2:13). That is not only a breaking of the heart, but a rending of the heart, when the grace of God appears to it.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE

Use 4: God Will Not Cast Us Off

*T*he consideration of all this may be a mighty strengthener to the faith of those sinners who have, in some measure, been wrought upon by the grace of God. Thus, if the Lord has manifested such an abundance of strength of the Spirit in seeking sinners to be reconciled, then, certainly, when sinners are reconciled, the heart of God will forever be with them. He will not lose the fruit of such grace as this once He has brought the sinner in, and that in such a way of mercy. Christ having brought it in, it cannot be any easy thing that shall take off God's heart from you. The goodness of God towards Adam in paradise was not so much goodness of God to him as could not admit of any breach between God and him; but the heart of God is so much in this work, in bringing sinners to be reconciled to Him, that it is impossible that ever there should be such a breach between them and Him again, that ever they should prove to be enemies.

Therefore let this strengthen your heart. When at any time you begin to have jealous thoughts of God, have recourse to your first calling to God: "I went on not many years ago in a

wretched, sinful way, but God came to me and showed me my evil way. He showed me His grace. Yes, when I stood out against His grace, He followed me and would not let me be at peace, but manifested it more and more, and has won my heart to Himself. How can I think that God, since He has done so before, should take advantage on every infirmity; that now every sin that He sees in me should make such breaches between Him and my soul; that He should cast me from Him? Can I think it? Certainly it is a wrong to the grace of God in the gospel."

OBJECTION. Aye, but you will say here is the evil: "Upon my loose walking, I cannot think that ever I was truly converted."

ANSWER. To that I answer but these two things:

First, if you are able to say thus in the presence of God: "The Lord knows that there is no weapon of enmity in my heart that is against God, that God reveals to me to be a sin, but I know my heart is against it. I can appeal to God so, and there is no duty that God requires of me but I know my heart is with it if the Lord will but reveal it to me"—in this case, if you have felt the work of God drawing you to Christ, and if your heart is thus kept to God, this is one good argument that certainly God and you are not enemies.

Second, if you can but say thus: "There is no argument that is so prevalent with me to make me not sin as this: I fear breaking the peace between God and me. This is the thing that makes my sin sting my soul indeed, because by that I come to lose some of that sweetness of the assurance of my peace with God." Can you say so? Keep your heart in such a frame (though you have many weaknesses) that you can say, "Whatsoever sin the Lord reveals to me, yet my heart is against it; and whatsoever duty the Lord requires of me, yet I know my heart is with it, and if there is anything that I do not know, oh, that I knew it more

and more! There is nothing that I fear sin for so much as this, because I see it breaks the peace between God and my soul.”

Is it so with your poor soul? I pronounce, in the name of God, “Peace be to you.” Though your heart is not as you would have it, you may conclude this certainly: God, who has manifested such grace in drawing your heart to Himself at first, will not cast you off. Certainly, God has some greater end in working so wonderfully towards you than to throw you off. Unless the Lord had some great thoughts of heart in glorying Himself in you, and to do you good, He would never have wrought so on your heart as He has done.

There are others who live under the light of the gospel, but the Lord never comes to their hearts to speak to them, as inwardly to draw their hearts, and that by His own Spirit, as He has done to you. The Lord has not had such great thoughts of heart to glorify His name on them in the day of His grace as toward you in the working of His grace. So, certainly, to you the Lord is about to do great things. That grace of His that has been as strong on you as it has been will carry you through all difficulties.

Certainly the grace of God has been strong, and it will be strong, and therefore build upon it. If you have a hard heart, do not say, “I have a hard heart, and therefore God’s heart is not towards me.” No, rather say, “I have a hard heart and therefore I will look towards God to break my hard heart, and bring my frozen and cold heart to these beams of God’s grace, and stand under these heavenly influences.”

If you are sensible of the hardness of your heart, and then if you sit down sullenly and heavily and think that, because of this, God will reject you, this is not the way to get your heart softened. Rather, call to mind what the grace of God has been toward you, and how the heart of God is towards sinners to be

reconciled to them, and what He has done for such sinners as you are. In this way you will keep your heart under the warm beams of the gospel, and thereby you will gain a great deal more than by sitting down in a sullen way.

Those kinds of herbs that grow under the warm sun grow better, and the fruit ripen better than those which grow out of the sun. So the heart that can keep itself continually in the sun of this mercy and goodness of God, thus expressing Himself in the gospel as willing to be reconciled to sinners, will thrive more abundantly than those that shall lie down sullenly and discontentedly.

This is a mighty encouragement for all sinners to come to be reconciled, a mighty strong encouragement to them. The Lord invites and beseeches in the gospel, sends His ministers to do it, and requires of them that they should do it in His name. What should hinder any sinner (none excepted) from coming in and being reconciled? We cannot tell who they are who shall not be reconciled, and therefore we may say concerning any particular sinner, "What should hinder you from coming in and being reconciled? And if God entreats, and Christ entreats, and ministers entreat, and you entreat, what stops you from being reconciled?"

The eunuch said, "Here is water enough, why may I not be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). So here is mercy enough; why may you not be reconciled? Have you such thoughts as these are? See that God is willing to be reconciled to sinners.

"Well, when I get home, I am resolved to throw myself before the Lord Jesus Christ. I am able to cry to Him for reconciliation, for otherwise I am damned and undone forever. And I hear that there is a way to be reconciled to Him. Well, this shall be my work now. I will set upon it presently. I will never stop crying out to God until I have found God's grace coming to me."

Are you resolved of this? Well, go on and fall down crying to God for mercy. Make this point part of your petition: "Lord, I have heard that Thou art willing to be reconciled. Now, Lord, here is a wretched sinner coming to be reconciled to Thee."

What hinders now when both shall entreat? Suppose two were fallen out one with the other, but now both sides are wrought upon, and one professes himself not only willing, but earnestly desirous to be reconciled, and the other comes and expresses himself too; surely both these will agree.

Now it is true many times between man and man that their expressions are but very slight, and there is not that at the bottom of their hearts which they express with their mouths. When two are fallen out, one may come to the first man and say, "Why will you not be at peace with such a man?"

"Oh, yes," says he, "I am willing."

So, he goes to the other and he says the same: "I am willing." And yet their hearts are not right one with the other. But now, in this case between God and your poor soul, be confident that on God's side it is most real. If you will make sure that your heart is real in desiring peace with God, and if you fully understand what you do when you desire peace with God, so that you will not be at peace with any sin, and if you desire it fully, then when you get this peace your heart shall be praising God.

You may wonder, "I shall live to the praise of God forever, and that shall be my endeavor. I would fain have it. But will God be at peace?"

Yes, God will get as much from it as you will. He shall thereby get that which He especially intended and aimed at in making the world. The great design that God had in making the world was to magnify the riches of His mercy, and if you are one whom God has fastened upon to show the riches of His

mercy and grace, He shall get that glory thereby to His name that He most intended when He made the world.

Therefore, though your soul is precious to you, know that God's glory is more precious to Him than your soul can be to you. Therefore, God is more desirous of your life (with those who shall be saved hereafter) than they can be desirous to be saved themselves. This is a certain truth, because God shall get more by the salvation of that soul than the soul shall get. You get something, but God gets much more.

Now, then, if God is seeking after that which so much concerns you, and you know this day that God's heart is more strongly set upon it than yours is, one would think that this would be a mighty encouragement for any sinner to come in to be reconciled. And therefore, go on in your way; let not temptation come and take off your heart (though yet God seems as an enemy to you). We know that Joseph's heart was as much toward his brethren as his brethren's hearts were towards him. Joseph dealt with them in a rugged way, as if he had been their enemy; yet even then was his heart towards them.

So go on in your way of seeking the Lord, and though God seems to be as an enemy, yet know that the heart of God is as much towards you as your heart can be towards Him, and that Christ looks upon you as one whom He shall get glory to Himself by forever. The good Lord says, "Amen, it shall be so."

Finis

THE LIFE OF
Jeremiah Burroughs

(1599–1646)

*T*his very amiable divine was born in the year 1599. He was forced to leave the university, and afterwards the kingdom, on account of his non-conformity. After he later finished his studies at the university, he entered the ministerial work and was chosen colleague to Edmund Calamy at Bury St. Edmunds. In 1631 he became rector of Tivetshal in the county of Norfolk, but upon the publication of Bishop Wren's articles and injunctions, in 1636 he was suspended and deprived of his living. He sheltered himself for some time under the hospitable roof of the Earl of Warwick, but, on account of the intolerant and oppressive proceedings of the ecclesiastical rulers, the noble Earl, at length, found it was impossible to protect him any longer. Shortly after, to escape the fire and persecution, he fled to Holland and settled at Rotterdam, where he was chosen teacher to the congregational church of which Mr. William Bridge was the pastor.

Upon his arrival, he was cordially received by the church, and continued to be a zealous and faithful laborer for several years, gaining a very high reputation among the people. After the commencement of the civil war, when the power of the bishops was set aside, he returned to England, says Granger's *Biographical History*, "not to preach sedition, but peace, for which he earnestly prayed and labored."

Mr. Burroughs was a highly honored and esteemed person, and he soon became a most popular and admired preacher.

After his return, his popular talents and great worth presently excited public attention, and he was chosen preacher to the congregations of Stepney and Cripplegate, London, then accounted two of the largest congregations in England. Mr. Burroughs preached at Stepney at seven o'clock in the morning, and William Greenhill at three in the afternoon. These two persons, stigmatized by the historian Anthony Wood as notorious schismatics and independents, were called by Mr. Hugh Peters, one "the morning star," the other "the evening star of Stepney."

Mr. Burroughs was chosen to be one of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, and was one of the dissenting brethren, but a divine of great wisdom and moderation. He united with his brethren, Messrs. Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, William Bridge, and Sydrach Sympson, in publishing their own "Apologetical Narration" in defense of their own distinguishing sentiments. The authors of this work, who had been exiles for religion, to speak in their own language, "...consulted the Scriptures without any prejudice. They considered the Word of God as impartially as men of flesh and blood are likely to do, in any juncture of time; the place they went to, the condition they were in, and the company they were with, affording no temptation to any bias."

They asserted that every church or congregation has sufficient power within itself for the regulation of religious government, and is subject to no external authority whatever. The principles upon which they founded their church government were to confine themselves in everything to what the Scriptures prescribed, without paying any attention to the opinions or practices of men; nor to tie themselves down too strictly to their present resolutions, so as to leave no room for alterations upon a further acquaintance with divine truth. They steered a middle course between Presbyterianism and Brownism: the former they accounted too arbitrary, the latter too rigid, deviating from the spirit and simplicity of the gospel.

These are the great principles of the Independents of the present day.

Richard Baxter, who knew his great worth, said, "If all the Episcopalians had been like Archbishop Usher, all the Presbyterians like Stephen Marshall, and all the Independents like Jeremiah Burroughs, the breaches of the church would soon have been healed." The last subject on which Burroughs preached was his *Irenicum*, an attempt to heal the divisions among Christians. This title has been published by Soli Deo Gloria Publications. His incessant labors, and his grief for the distractions of the times, are said to have hastened his end. He died of tuberculosis on November 14, 1646, at the age of 47. The historian Granger says, "he was a man of learning, candor, and modesty, and of an exemplary and irreproachable life." Thomas Fuller has classed him among the learned writers of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Williams' *Christian Preacher* says that his *Exposition of Hosea* is a pleasing specimen, to show how the popular preachers of his time applied the Scriptures in their expository discourses to the various cases of their hearers. He published several of his writings while he lived, and his friends sent forth many others after his death, most of which were highly esteemed by all pious Christians.

A Summary of the Gospel

by Jeremiah Burroughs

From Gospel Conversation (1657)

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The gospel of Christ in general is this: It is the good tidings that God has revealed concerning Christ. More largely it is this: As all mankind was lost in Adam and became the children of wrath, put under the sentence of death, God, though He left His fallen angels and has reserved them in the chains of eternal darkness, yet He has thought upon the children of men and has provided a way of atonement to reconcile them to Himself again.

Namely, the second Person in the Trinity takes man's nature upon Himself, and becomes the Head of a second covenant, standing charged with sin. He answers for it by suffering what the law and divine justice required, and by making satisfaction for keeping the law perfectly, which satisfaction and righteousness He tenders up to the Father as a sweet savor of rest for the souls that are given to Him.

And now this mediation of Christ is, by the appointment of the Father, preached to the children of men, of whatever nation or rank, freely offering this atonement unto sinners for atonement, requiring them to believe in Him and, upon believing, promising not only a discharge of all their former sins, but that they shall not enter into condemnation, that none of their sins or unworthiness shall ever hinder the peace of God with them, but that they shall through Him be received into the number of those who shall have the image of God again to be renewed unto them, and that they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.