

Lecture XXV.

Of The Way Of Man's Delivery.

1 Tim. i. 15—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Of all doctrines that ever were published to men, this contained here is the choicest, as you see the very preface prefixed to it imports. And truly, as it is the most excellent in itself, it could not but be sweet unto us, if we had received into the heart the belief of our own wretchedness and misery. I do not know a more sovereign cordial for a fainting soul, than this faithful saying, “That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And therefore we are most willing to dwell on this subject, and to inculcate it often upon you, that without him you are undone and lost, and in him you may be saved. I profess, all other subjects, howsoever they might be more pleasing to some hearers, are unpleasant and unsavoury to me. This is that we should once learn, and ever be learning—to know him that came to save us, and come to him.

We laboured to show unto you the state of sin and misery that Adam's first transgression hath subjected all mankind unto, which if it were really and truly apprehended, I do not think but it would make this saying welcome to your souls. Man being plunged into such a deep pit of misery, sin and death having overflowed the whole world, and this being seen and acknowledged by a sinner, certainly the next question in order of nature is this, hath God left all to perish in this estate? Is there any remedy provided for sin and misery? And this will be indeed the query of a self-condemned sinner. Now there is a plank after

this broken ship; there is an answer sweet and satisfactory to this question; “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

We shall not expatiate into many notions about this, or multiply many branches of this. The matter is plain and simple, and we desire to hold out plainly and simply, that this is the remedy of sin and misery. When none could be found on the right hand or left hand, here a Saviour from heaven comes down from above, whence no good could be expected, because a good God was provoked. “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”—that was a proverb concerning him. But I think in some sense it might be said, Can any good come down from heaven, from his holy habitation to this accursed earth? Could any thing be expected from heaven but wrath and vengeance? And if no good could be expected that way, what way could it come? Sure if not from heaven, then from no airth.¹⁵⁴ Yet from heaven our help is come, from whence it could not be looked for,—even from him who was offended, and whose justice was engaged against man. That he might both satisfy justice and save man,—that he might not wrong himself nor destroy man utterly,—he sends his only begotten Son, equal with himself in majesty and glory, into the world, in the state of a servant, to accomplish man's salvation, and perform to him satisfaction. Therefore Christ came into the world to save sinners.

There were two grand impediments in the way of man's salvation, which made it impossible to man; one is God's justice, another is man's sin. These two behoved to be satisfied or removed, ere there can be access to save a sinner. The sentence of divine justice is pronounced against all mankind, “death passed upon all,”—a sentence of death and condemnation. Now, when the righteousness and faithfulness of God is engaged unto this, how strong a party do you think that must be? What power can break that prison of a divine curse, and take out a sinner from

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¹⁵⁴ [That is, quarter.—*Ed.*]

under Justice's hand? Certainly there is no coming out till the uttermost farthing be paid that was owing,—till complete satisfaction be given for all wrongs. Now, truly, the redemption of the soul had ceased for ever—it is so precious that no creature can give any thing in exchange for it—except Jesus Christ had come into the world, one that might be able to tread that wine-press of wrath alone, and give his life a ransom, in value far above the soul, and pay the debt of sin that we were owing to God. And, indeed, he was furnished for this purpose, a person suited and fitted for such a work—a man, to undertake it in our name, and God, to perform it in his own strength—a man, that he might be made under the law, and be humbled even to the death of the cross, that so he might obey the commandment, and suffer the punishment due to us; and all this was elevated beyond the worth of created actions or sufferings, by that divine nature. This perfumed all his humanity, and all done by it, or in it. This put the stamp of divinity upon all, and imposed an infinite value upon the coin of finite obedience and sufferings. And so in his own person, by coming into the world, and acting and suffering in the place of sinners, he hath taken the first great impediment out of the way; taken down the high wall of divine justice which had enclosed round about the sinner, and satisfied all its demands, by paying the price; so that there is nothing upon God's part to accuse or condemn, to hinder or obstruct salvation.

But then there is an inner wall, or dark dungeon of sin, into which the sinner is shut up, and reserved in chains of his own lusts, until the time of everlasting darkness; and when heaven is opened by Christ's death, yet this keeps a sinner from entering in. Therefore Jesus Christ, who came himself into the world to satisfy justice and remove its plea, that there might be no obstruction from that airth, he sends out his powerful Spirit with the word, to deliver poor captive sinners, to break down the wall of ignorance and blindness, to cast down the high tower of wickedness and enmity against God, to take captive and chain

our lusts that kept us in bondage. And, as he made heaven accessible by his own personal obedience and sufferings, so he makes sinners ready and free to enter into that salvation by his Spirit's working in their persons. In the one, he had God, as it were, his party, and him he hath satisfied so far, that there was a voice came from heaven to testify it, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and therefore, in testimony of it, God raised him from the dead. In the other, he hath Satan and man's wicked nature as his party, and these he must conquer and subdue. These he must overcome, ere we can be saved. A strange business indeed, and a great work, to bring two such opposite and distant parties together,—a holy and just God, and a sinful and rebellious creature; and to take them both as parties, that he might reconcile both.

Now what do you think of this, my beloved, that such a glorious person is come down from heaven, for such a work as the salvation of sinners? I put no doubt, it would be most acceptable unto you, if you knew your misery, and knowing your misery, you could not but accept it, if you believed that it were true and faithful. I find one of these two the great obstruction in the way of souls receiving advantage by such glad tidings. Either the absolute necessity and excellency of the gospel is not considered, or the truth and reality of it is not believed. Men either do not behold the beauty of goodness in it, or do not see the light of truth in it. Either there is nothing discovered to engage their affections, or nothing seen to persuade their understandings. Therefore the apostle sounds a trumpet, as it were, in the entry, before the publication of these glad news, and commends this unto all men as a true and faithful saying, and as worthy of all acceptance. There is here the highest truth and certainty to satisfy the mind: It "is a faithful saying." And there is here also the chiefest good to satiate the heart: It is "worthy of all acceptance." Now, if you do really apprehend your lost and miserable estate, you cannot but behold that ravishing goodness in it; and behold that you cannot,

till you see the other first. Whence is it, I pray you, that so many souls are never stirred with the proposition of such things in the gospel,—that the riches and beauty of salvation in Jesus Christ doth not once move them? Is it not because there is no lively apprehension of their misery without him?¹⁵⁵

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¹⁵⁵ [The discourse ends so abruptly here, as plainly to show that it is an unfinished production, and was not designed by the learned and pious author for publication.—*Ed.*]