

## SERMON VI.

### DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD.

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#### GALATIANS I. 4.

*Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.*

ALL have but a time to live in this world, and when we have acted our part, must enter a state of happiness or woe to all eternity. Man being by nature in a sinful and miserable condition, by reason of the fall, is an enemy to God and holiness; but God hath given Christ, and Christ hath given himself to be our Saviour and Redeemer. There are several things from which Christ came to redeem us; from the wrath to come, the captivity of Satan, the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, the condemnation of sin, the sting of death, the fear of death, the legal and ceremonial law, and from this present evil world.

To explain the words of our text a little, we may notice, First, The meritorious cause of our deliverance,—the undertaking of Christ, “he gave himself for our sins—the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,” and “he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” Secondly, He redeems us from this present evil world. It is not evil of itself originally, but accidentally. It is an evil world, as it respects both sin and suffering. It is in this world all the sins of men are committed; and O how great and cursed are the sins here committed! On earth it is men’s pleasure to sin, but in hell is their torment. There will be no meat nor drink, no houses nor lands, no silver nor gold to delight men; it will be the time of their sorrow and misery. In this evil world, believers themselves are often overcome and borne down by sin. The present world is also a state of suffering. It is the saint’s purgatory; all their hell is in this world, and they may despair of finding true happiness here, for one trouble comes after another. Thirdly, It is called this present world; and it is well for good men it is only a present world. “I would not live always.” While God is building his church, he keeps up the stage of this world, but when the number of his elect shall be finished, he will then

take it down ; it is but for a little while and the righteous shall be delivered, and have a joyful entrance into glory and happiness : it will be but a little longer, and the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world will be at an end.

The doctrine contained in the text is, that Christ himself, and Christ alone, doth deliver all his people, and only his, from this present evil world.

In the discussion of this doctrine, we shall endeavour to shew,

I. What this world is from which our Lord delivers his people? The world is sometimes taken for the whole frame of heaven and earth ; sometimes figuratively for the men of the world, either all mankind, or the unregenerate part of the world. By the world, sometimes, the things of the world are meant ; these may be either good or evil in their nature. Some of the things of the world are evil occasionally, as abused by men. Now Christians are delivered from all these, " they are crucified to the world," and the world to them. We shall inquire,

II. Who they are that are thus delivered? The apostle says, *us* ; this may signify the church and people of God collectively, that are called out of the world and set apart for God and his service. These are redeemed by Christ, he hath loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood ; they shall abide through all ages in spite of all opposition and persecution. It may also refer to every particular person in the church of Christ, every true Christian, who shall be kept from this present evil world.

III. Let us shew, what it is in the world from which Christ delivers his people. 1. He delivers them from the state of the world. Every man and woman is born in a state of sin and misery, of wrath and condemnation ; " for the whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19. The people of God have a new nature given them, and are not in the same condition as the world ; they who were afar off from God and holiness, are " made nigh by the blood of Christ ;" they are taken out of the devil's family and are " made fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God." " This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk, not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them ; because of the blindness of their heart," Eph. iv. 17, 18. And again, " The scripture hath concluded all under sin," but when the promise by faith is given to them that believe, they all become " the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 22, 26. Though the righteous may be chastened in this world for their offences, they shall not be condemned with the world ; for they are not of the world.

2. They are delivered from the snares of the world. The true Christian is, by converting grace brought out of the snare of the devil, who hath the wicked in chains and keeps them in his circuit. Believers are set at liberty and shall never be entangled as the wicked are ; their eyes are opened to discover the snare in every thing ; “ Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird ;” and “ we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,” 1 John v. 18 ; that is, not so as to get him within his dominion.

3. True Christians are delivered from the spirit of the world. The men of the world are of a base and low spirit, they are all for themselves ; but the people of God are of a brave, noble disposition. “ The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.” “ The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,” James iii. 17. Being partakers of this wisdom they mind the things of God, and of Christ, and of the world to come ; but the men of the world being influenced by the spirit of the world, seek those things which are “ earthly, sensual, and devilish.”

4. They are delivered from the course of this evil world. They formerly “ walked according to the course of this world,” and were like other folks ; they could talk vainly and profanely, they could swear, lie, and act as others did ; but now the case is altered, and men “ think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you,” 1 Peter iv. 4. Let me beseech you, “ brethren, by the mercies of God—that ye be not conformed to this world ; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” Rom. xii. 1, 2. “ Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things,” Phil. iii. 18, 19 ; that is, there are many among you, pretended Christians, that thus walk : “ but our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Christians have a peculiar course contrary to that of the world.

IV. Let us consider, when Christians are delivered from this present evil world? 1. They may be said to be delivered from this present evil world at their conversion. The Spirit of God does then convince them of their sin and misery ; that they are amongst the crowd of those that perish, and bids them save themselves from this untoward generation. It may be, poor graceless souls sit out many a strong conviction, but at last the word of the Lord comes with power, and they are

plucked as brands out of the fire; then the soul is ready to say, this world hath bewitched me. His former companions come and say, go with us; what, must all be lost but a few precise people? But they cannot prevail; for he thinks, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. He has now learned to say, with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. I will not be put off with the world, it is only a morsel, and will not be a satisfying portion for the soul. Having tasted the grace of God, and of Christ, and true religion, having once enjoyed this heavenly water, he will not thirst after worldly things, but pant for the living God.

2. We are delivered from this evil world, when we make progress in sanctification. The more a soul mounts heavenward, the less all other things appear. He thinks within himself, the world is not the New Jerusalem, nor worth taking any notice of. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. The believing soul can say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 7, 8. A Christian, as he grows in sanctification, becomes more indifferent to the world; he is willing to part with houses, and lands, and wife, and children, and even with his own life, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, if called to it; for he knows that his Lord and Saviour can be better to him than all these things. If even a prison be his lot, his soul can sing praises when God is with him, and he rises above the world.

3. A Christian is delivered from this present evil world, when he departs into the world of spirits. God will not suffer his people to be always tossed on the sea of life, but will in due time take them out of it, and their souls shall not see destruction; death sets the souls of God's people at liberty. God does not love to have his people long from him, therefore he sends death to fetch them home to himself; then they are delivered from all afflictions, temptations, and corruptions, and are conducted to that place, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," where the devil can never throw a dart at them more.

4. The righteous will be completely delivered from this present evil world, on the morning of the resurrection. At death, the body is left for a while in the grave; but at the last day,

the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise; the earth and the sea shall give up the dead that are in them, and the bodies of the saints shall then be glorified like the body of Jesus Christ. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. The devil shall then be quite cast out and reign no more; for Christ "must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Job saith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," Job xix. 25, 26. We leave the bodies of our pious friends in the grave, but they shall rise again; they will be "accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead," where they "neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection," Luke xx. 35, 36.

V. Let us proceed to notice what Christ has done, whereby his people are delivered from this present evil world? He has delivered them,

1. By his meritorious life and death. "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." He might have come in power, pomp, and glory; but he chose to come in a poor, mean, and despised condition. Why therefore should we make account of these things which he cast at his feet? Christ is now become our atonement; the bonds are cancelled between the world and us; he hath set us at liberty, and we are now dead to the world and married to Christ; so also let your affections and thoughts be.

2. Christ hath delivered us by his victorious resurrection and ascension. By rising again from the dead, raising the spirits of his people above the world, and his ascension on high, the souls of believers are advanced to sit with Christ "in heavenly places," and thereby become heavenly-minded. Christ is gone into heaven and has taken possession for his saints.

3. He delivers his people by his prevailing intercession for them. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me," John xvii. 9. When on earth, he prayed for their deliverance from the evil in the world, and that they might be with him where he is, to behold his glory. Now he is in heaven, he takes care of them; he is

“ a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted,” Heb. ii. 17, 18. Such is his concern for them, “ that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but will with the temptation make a way to escape.”

4. His people are delivered from this present evil world, by the Holy Spirit’s efficacious working. The Spirit convinces the soul, that all the favours of the world are of no value; that its threatenings are not to be dreaded, nay, that we should “ glory in tribulation.” Assisted by the Spirit, his people can trample on worldly things; they are of a different spirit from the men of the world, they are not busied about trifles, but are “ in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.”

VI. We shall mention the reasons, why our Lord delivers his people from this present evil world?

1. Because none else can. The redemption of the soul is precious, “ Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

2. Christ delivers his people from this present evil world, because there is no proportion between a soul and the whole world; it is not all worth one soul, neither can it satisfy the immortal part. 3. Christ was purposely fitted for this work. He was both God and man, and therefore is “ able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” Heb. vii. 25. 4. It is one principal part of his undertaking, that he should deliver his people from this present evil world. Let us now inquire,

VII. Why Christ delivers *his*, and only his? 1. Because those, and those only, were given him by the Father: “ Ye believe not,” saith Christ, “ because ye are not of my sheep:— all that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,” John. x. 26. & vi. 37. 2. These and only these, are partakers of the glorious privileges of the gospel: “ If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,” John xiv. 23. These people are a chosen generation. 3. They are redeemed by Christ to bring forth different fruits from those produced by the world: he “ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” Titus ii. 14. 4. Christ hath prepared a king-

dom of glory, for those who are not of this world, and prepares them for that state: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 12, 13. Let us shew,

VIII. How it can be said God's people are *already* delivered from this present evil world? We answer, because the price is already paid. They may be said to be delivered, because the ransom is laid down for their freedom. They have also the promise of deliverance while in the world, and at last deliverance from it. They may be said to have the first-fruits of it, being sealed by the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of their inheritance. They already experience less deliverances, which are the pledges of further and greater. We shall now proceed to the application.

This doctrine may be useful by way of information.

1. If Christ delivers his, and only his, then learn that Christians are very highly favoured: they are not like other men, who are of this world, but are from above. The Christian's relations are above; his father, who is the Lord Jehovah; his elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ; his mother, which is the church; his kindred, which are the angels and glorified spirits—are all above. Christians are kings in disguise, they are not known in this world, they have a prepared kingdom, and now and then they have secret intercourse with the God of that state. This doctrine may inform us,

2. Why the people of God are hated, despised, and persecuted in this world. It is because they are not of it, but chosen out of it; therefore carnal men are ready to say of a Christian, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live," Acts xxii. 22. It is said in Heb. xi. 38, concerning the people of God, that they are they "of whom the world was not worthy;" and yet "they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." If then you desire to be different in sentiment and practice from the men of this world, you must expect tribulation here.

3. We may learn, that the Christian's religion is not suited to the world's interests. "My kingdom," saith Christ, "is not of this world:"—it is a spiritual kingdom, which he sets up in the hearts of his people; "the kingdom of God is within you."

4. We are taught by this doctrine, that the world is not so excellent a thing as men are apt to esteem it. Christ redeems his people out of it; and all its enjoyments, which men so eagerly pursue, are only vanity and vexation of spirit. What

all men that they are so concerned about what cannot satisfy, but so indifferent to spiritual things which are far better? God gives the earth to the children of men, but reserves better things for his people: "Man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," Psalm xxxix. 6. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

We may make use of this doctrine, by way of conviction to the carnal world. If Christ delivers his, and only his, then what will become of you that have your portion in this world, that are wise only for time, that have the world in your mind the last at night and first in the morning, and thus shew it is the chief thing you seek? Now consider,

1. Does not the world stifle the convictions of God's word many times? Do not the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the good seed of the word so that it becomes unfruitful? Men lose their convictions, and deface the impressions of the Spirit of God, which they had under the ministry of the word, by their business and worldly concerns. One says, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." Another says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Another replies, "I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come." Thus this present evil world is doted upon by carnal men, to the loss of the soul. Consider,

2. Does not the world forbid the banns of marriage between the soul and Christ? Does it not break the treaty, and tell you it is too dear a bargain to forsake all for his sake? Many will follow Christ and religion in the time of prosperity, but when Christ and the world part, and his followers are exposed to persecution, they show which side they love most.

3. Does not the world distract and hinder men in the service and worship of God? Though you draw nigh to God in ordinances with your bodies and lips, are not your hearts going after covetousness? One is thinking of yesterday's business, and another of what he is to do to-morrow. Worldly affairs must be attended to, but let it be at proper times, and mind that first which is of most importance. Consider,

4. Can you take content in the world? If so, you are not of God. When your outward comforts abound, you may be ready to say, with the rich man in the gospel, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" then it proves, you "are adulterers and adulteresses: for know ye not that the friendship of the



world is enmity with God?" The world will fail you in your greatest need, and what will you do with all your riches in the hour of death, when your soul must be separated from your body? Yet you venture to swim over the sea of God's wrath for this world, which, after all, proves but like a mouthful of water that cannot satisfy your thirst. Fools that men are, to venture on eternal misery for a little pleasure!

Let us use this doctrine by way of trial. God hath "set apart him that is godly for himself."

1. The main care of those who are delivered from this present evil world is, to please God and serve him. They take no thought what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed; but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing that all these things shall be added unto them. "Cast your care upon God, for he careth for you."

2. They are delivered from the fear of the world. A Christian does not fear the men of the world, neither is he afraid of losing the world; but can say, if God call for it, let it go. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread," Isa. viii. 13. Mind your souls and serve God, then fear not the world.

3. They are delivered from the love of the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. Inquire, is your love set on the world above? Are you troubled that you lose the favour of this world? Do you delight most in the company of God? To conclude, try yourselves by these things. (1.) Do you like the world so as to forego heaven for it; and would you prefer prosperous profaneness before persecuted godliness? (2.) Are you weaned from the world and weary of it? (3.) Is there any thing that pleases you in the world, except what drops from heaven, and comes as a love-token from your heavenly Father? If you are delivered from this present evil world, you will pity those who have their portion here, and prize communion with God above all other enjoyments. (4.) When worldly thoughts disturb you in religious duties, is it a great burden to you? If you are delivered from the world, then, when your hands are in the world, you will labour to have your heart in heaven. Amen.