

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

NO. 388

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1861
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

I think it is well that the death of Christ and its consequent blessings should occupy one place in our discussion here tonight, for not only is it the central truth in the Calvinistic theory, but the death of Christ is the center point of all history and of all time. The devout of all ages have stood and gazed with anxious glance into these deep mysteries, searching what, or what manner of things the Holy Spirit did by them testify and reveal.

And we know that hereafter, in the world of glory, the redeemed shall sing of these things forever, and shall find in the Redeemer and in His work, fresh matter for love and for praise as eternity shall roll on. We take our stand between the two, and I think the language of our hearts tonight is akin to all ages of the church of Christ, "God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now the grand result of the death of our Lord—though not the only result—the grand result of that death, so far as man is concerned, is the redemption which it ultimately achieves. And with regard to the extent of that redemption, we believe the Scriptures are plain and speak most clearly, when they tell of a final day of manifestation, when the redeemed *from amongst* men shall take their stand before the Redeemer, to sing of Him who, as the Good Shepherd, has laid down His life for His sheep and has purchased unto Himself a peculiar people—His body, the church.

Now we believe that, in reaching that grand and final result, there are many steps that must be taken, and we think that, from these preliminary steps, there are multitudes who gain rich handfuls of blessings, who shall not however reap the full harvest of glory. We believe that the whole world is flooded with blessings, and that the stream rolls broad and clear from the hill-foot of Calvary, and laves the feet alike of the godly and of the ungodly, the thankful and the thankless. But from the riven side of Christ there comes forth one stream—the river of life, whose banks are trodden only by the feet of the multitude of believers, who wash and are clean, who drink and live for evermore.

We speak tonight of Christ's death in its various relations, so as to touch upon and include sundry things which cannot be properly classed under the title of particular redemption, but we feel we are driven to this course so as to be able to do justice to ourselves and to our leading theme.

Now, we have three sets of truths before us, and these three sets of truths we must deal with. (1) We have, first of all, a God holy and righteous, loving and gracious, a God who has been most grievously wronged and injured, and a God who must be honored alike by the giving Him all the glory of which He has been robbed, and by the bearing of His just expression of holy indignation at the wrong that has been done unto Him. We have a God jealous in the extreme, and yet, strange enough, declaring that He passes by iniquity and forgives transgression and sin.

We have a God truthful, who has sworn "that the soul that sinneth it shall die," and who yet speaks to those souls and says, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die." A God whom we know must be just, and must execute upon the ungodly that which they have justly merited, and who yet strangely says, "Come and let us plead together, and though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them as wool, and though they be red like crimson, I will make them white as snow." That is one set of truths—strange and apparently contradictory.

Then we have another. (2) We have a world lost and yet swathed in an atmosphere of mercy. We have a world dark with the darkness of death, and yet everywhere we find it more or less under the influences of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which came a light unto darkness, that did not and could not comprehend it.

And we have, moreover, a world rebellious and serving another master than the right one, and yet nevertheless beneath the feet of Him who has been made Head over all things for His body's sake, which is the church.

(3) And then, once more, we have a church peculiar in its unmerited privileges, chosen from before all time to inherit the kingdom given to it before the world began—a kingdom that can never be trodden upon, save by the spotless and the deathless, and yet the inheritors are by nature dead in trespasses and in sins—lost, ruined—without a God and without a hope in the world.

How are all those strange and apparently contradictory things to be solved? One clue, we find, is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The work involves its ultimate end, which is redemption, and of that work we are about to speak here tonight.

We speak first of those blessings which come from the death of Christ and are for all men. The whole world is under a mediatorial government, the whole spirit of which is a government of longsuffering, graciousness, tenderness, and mercy, such as could not have been exercised had Christ never died. A government there might have been, but it must be, we think, a government akin to that which is found in the place where those are found who make their bed in hell.

We find, moreover, that the direct and indirect influences of the cross of Christ have pervaded the world, and none can tell how often its gentle spirit has come like oil upon the troubled waters, or what man, with his wild passions, would have been without the ameliorating influence of the cross. We possibly may be able to tell, when we look across the impassable gulf into a Gehenna beneath, and see sin unchecked working out its dire results. And we believe that whatever comes short of that darkness, whose very light is darkness, is due to that light which radiates from the cross of Christ, and whatever is short of hell streams from Calvary.

And then, further still, we have a Bible, a revelation filled with the love and mercy of God to man—a Bible in which our Lord Himself could show, beginning at Moses and in all the prophets, that which did testify concerning Himself. And apart from Jesus Christ and His death, there could have been no such revelation of God's character unto the human race.

A revelation there might have been, but it would have been a revelation of Sinai's horrors and terrors, without even the spark of hope which comes forth from that dispensation there set forth. There might have been a revelation, I say, but it would have been a revelation that would not have wound up as this does with a blessing. It would have ended like the Old Testament with a curse. It would have begun with the same. It would have been worse than Ezekiel's roll of woes, which is filled all over with terrible lamentation, and with awful sorrow and woe.

And again, there is a positive overture of mercy, a true and faithful declaration of good tidings unto every creature, and we *do* believe that it is our duty to preach the Gospel unto every creature. And the Gospel runs thus, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, for he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

That overture we hold to be no mockery, but made in good faith—and that overture is not the overture of a shadow. But the presentation of solid, substantial blessings, and for the rejection of that, not God, but man is answerable, and for the rejection of that he will be lost. "For this is the condemnation, that they have not believed on him whom God hath sent."

And then, lastly, we find that as the purchase of the death of Christ there is a church, and that church is sent forth into the world with orders to bless it and to do good unto all men. It is bidden to go forth as a light in the midst of darkness. It is bidden so to live as to be the salt of the whole earth.

Now we say that each one of these blessings is no small gift from God to man—no mean result of the death of our Master. And combined, we think they would form a boon worthy of a God. And as we put our hand upon it, we think we can give a full and true expression, and with an emphasis surpassed by none, to that glorious text, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And we think, upon our system, and upon ours alone, we can give full truthfulness and emphasis to the remainder, "That whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting life."

Now upon redemption proper, the latter part of our theme, we will pass on to speak. And first, what do we mean by redemption? Most certainly we do not mean the POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION, for we have learned to distinguish between the possibility of a thing and a thing itself. We feel this, that we do not preach and cannot preach, gathering our teaching from the Bible, a possibility of redemption. We proclaim a redemption.

Nor do we mean by redemption a contingency of redemption, which, again, is contingent upon a third thing. We have learned to distinguish between a contingency and a certainty. We proclaim a certain redemption, and we speak of that which is not possible but positive, not contingent but certain.

Neither do we mean by redemption such an outgrowth of the man's own power or goodness as shall enable him to burst his way through every bondage and to get forth free—such an elevation of human nature, whether by the education of others or by his own works, as to enable him at last to stand free. If we meant that, we should use the word escape, but not the word redemption.

And again, if we meant, as some, alas! have seemed to mean, God's foregoing His claim upon man, God's waiving man's liabilities, and God's giving up that which we believe, as a holy God, He cannot surrender—if we meant that, we should speak of emancipation—of pure pardon and forgiveness. But we do not. We mean redemption.

And then, again, we do not mean by redemption the meeting of the debts, either in prospective or in the present. We do not mean that the man shall, either in the present or in the future, bear any part of the penalty, and by some goodness, either in the present or foreseen, satisfy God's claim upon him. If we meant that, I think we should use altogether another word than the word redemption.

What do we mean by redemption? We mean, by redemption, the work of one being which is done for another, but generally a helpless one, in order to give him perfect freedom. And when we speak of redemption, mark you, we speak of a thing that is the result of that work. We distinguish between redemption and redemption work.

What we mean by redemption is just this—the grand result and end of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we could as well speak of redemption apart from the redeemed, as we could speak of life apart from a living creature. Life and living creatures are co-extensive and so is redemption and the redeemed.

If you take down any book that will give you an explanation of the word “redemption,” I think you will find three things put therein. It is a ransom, a rescue, and a release. Now, I take the whole three words to be the fullness of the meaning of our one word. It is such a ransom, and such a rescue, as result in a complete and full release. Whatever stops short of that thing is, of course, not the thing itself. The thing itself that we mean is positively being redeemed and made free.

Now, just by way of simplifying the subject, let me speak of the Redeemer, and of the redemption work, and of those who are redeemed.

First, the Redeemer who is He? We believe Him to be the Word that was with God, equal unto God, and was God—who became flesh and dwelt amongst us. At the same time, the flesh did not become, in any sense, deity, neither did the deity, in any sense, become carnal. They formed another person and that person, the God-man, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

Now, what is He? And here I just ask that question in order to meet some objections, and if I can, to put on one side, two or three theories that seem to fight against ours.

I hear a voice saying, in reply to that question, what is He? Why, He is God's idea of humanity. He is God, who has taken up humanity from its fallen state, raised it up not only to the place where He first put it, but beyond, even to the height to which He hoped it would ascend, or possibly something beyond it. And now, from henceforth, such is the union betwixt common humanity, that the lost, in their degradation, have but to look to their common humanity exalted, realize their identity with it, and to feel themselves, by that deed, raised to the same standard, and redeemed and free for evermore.

To which we reply, there is enough truth in that lie to keep it alive and that is all. We do believe that our Master did lay hold of humanity. We do believe that He is the most perfect man that ever was. We

do believe that He has honored and dignified the human race, by taking that upon Him, and by becoming flesh like unto ourselves.

But we cannot see how that the gazing upon that can open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, give life to the dead, and procure the discharge of our sins any more than we can see how that the gazing upon an Olympic game could give to the physically lame, physical strength, or could give to those who were physically dead, life from their physical death.

And again, I hear other voices replying to that question. They say, "He is the great example of self-denial and of the submission of the human will to the divine. And what redemption is, is this—that man now can look to that great display of self-denial, can catch of its spirit, and can imitate it, and by that deed of subjection, making the will to succumb to the will of the divine, they may, at least, emancipate themselves and go forth free.

To which we reply, once more, there is enough truth in that just to cement the error together, and to give it a plausible appearance to the sons of men, but there is nothing more. It is true that our Savior was the Sent One of the Father. It is true, He came, saying, "Lo! I come to do thy will." He declares He was not doing His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. And He winds up by saying, "Not my will, but thine be done."

But after all, we cannot, and dare not accept that submission of Christ's will to the Father, as being a satisfaction for sin—neither can we see how, by the imitation of that, we can, in any sense, wipe away the sins of the past or free ourselves from the penalty that is yet to come.

But now to answer for ourselves. What is our Lord Jesus Christ? And we say, that in life He is the great example and copy. In death, He is the substitute, and in both, the federal Head—the elder Brother and Kinsman of His church.

But now time warns me that I must pass on to the second thought—the work of redemption. First of all, we gaze at that part of the work which is Godward, and that we call atonement. And when you ask me—What is the character of the atonement? I reply—It has a twofold nature, to correspond with the twofold character of sin. Sin is a transgression of the law, and a consequent insult to Him who is the lawmaker.

But it is something more than that. The power by which man has transgressed has been perverted. It was given to him to obey the law that he might glorify God. And to make, therefore, satisfaction for sin, there must be a bringing to the law obedience. There must be the bearing of the sanction because of the disobedience. There must be the rendering to God the glory due to Him and there must be the bearing of His just displeasure and the expression of His holy wrath and indignation.

That Christ has done—He came, and His whole life was obedience to the law, for He was obedient even unto death, and in that death He bore the sanction of the law—for He was made a curse, it being written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." His whole life was spent to glorify God, and at its close He could say, "I have glorified You, and I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

And His death was the bearing of the just displeasure of God towards the sinner, and in the agony of His heart He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In these things we behold, therefore, the presentation of the obedience due, the giving to God the glory due, the bearing of God's displeasure, and the enduring of the curse of the law.

And now the question would be put to me as to the value of atonement. We believe that its value depends not so much upon the Being appeased, nor upon the beings to be atoned for, as upon the Being who makes the atonement. The value of Christ's atonement is the value of Himself. He gave Himself for us. If he had stood as the surety of but one soul, He could not have been less than Himself. If He stood as a surety for the whole world, He could not be more. He gave Himself. What more could He bestow? The value of the atonement is the value of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In His flesh, He can take man's place, and by His divinity He can give, and must give anyhow, an infinite value through the work that He, in mortal flesh, performs. For one soul, therefore, it must be infinite—for more or less it cannot be. Infinite it is, and infinite it must be, and we have no part or parcel

with those who would say, that if Judas was to have been saved, Judas' amount of agony would have had to have been borne by Christ, and Judas' amount of penalty would have had to have been paid, in addition to what has been borne and paid by Christ. He took the place, the room, and stead of the church, and then all that He was worth went in that church's place and stead.

More He could not do, if He had taken the place of the whole world. But you ask me, is there any limit to the atonement at all? I say I think there is, and the limit seems to be, not in the value, but in the purpose. The limit seems to be this theory—for *whom* did He die? In whose place and stead did He stand? If He stood in the place and stead of the whole world, then He made atonement for the sins of the whole world, and the whole world will be saved. If he stood in the place and stead of His church, then He made atonement for His church, and the whole church will be saved.

We believe that Christ took the place and stead of every believer, that the believer's sin was put on Him, and thus the ex-sinner can go forth free. But I hear a voice saying, "I challenge substitution and I object to that." So be it. I ask you, did Christ die for sin at all? It must be answered—Yes. Then for whose sin did He die? If for His own, then He suffered righteously. Did He die for the sins of the whole world? then justice cannot demand this again. Did He die for part of the sins of the whole world? then the rest of the sins will still condemn the world, then must have Christ died in vain.

We believe that He took all the sins of some men. It was not a fictitious condemnation. It was not a fancy sin made for the occasion. It was a positive sin that had been committed by God's people, and is transferred from them to Him who laid down His life for His sheep, loving us, and giving Himself for and in the stead or in the place of His people.

But then, we say this work of redemption comprised something more than thus paying down the ransom, and the bearing of the penalty. It is, moreover, a rescue—for sin has not only made men thus to have insulted God and broken God's law, it has transferred them unto bondage under the allegiance of one—"the strong man armed." They must be freed from that. Christ came, has destroyed death, and through death him also who has the power of death, even the devil—making an open show of them upon His cross, ascending up on high a victor, leading captivity captive.

And then, I think, there is yet something further. Sin has affected the man himself, made him to need in his own person a releasing from the dominion, power, and corruption of sin. This Christ has secured by His covenant with the Father. But that which I take to comprise effectual calling and final perseverance, I shall leave to my brethren who shall speak afterwards.

And now as to the persons redeemed—who are they? The church, we say, whether you look at the church as elect from all eternity, or the church believing in time, or the church as glorified hereafter. We look at them all as one, and we say these are the redeemed, these are they for whom redemption has been procured. We cannot add to their number, we cannot diminish them, for we believe that those whom God did foreknow, He did predestinate—that those whom He did predestinate, He also called—for whom He calls He justifies, for whom He justifies He also glorifies—the whole are one—and for these redemption has been made.

Now, if I may be permitted the time, I will just touch upon one or two objections, and then I will conclude. I hear someone saying, "But by that, sir, you surely must limit God's love." I reply, is God loving when He punishes any and does not save all? Then is He loving also when He purposes to do that, for whatever justifies the deed, justifies the purpose which gives the morality to the deed.

And then I hear another objection, "How can you, sir, upon that theory, go to preach the Gospel unto every creature?" You have heard that answered—we have got the order, but I reply yet further. I could not go and preach the Gospel upon any other theory, for I dare not go on that fool's errand of preaching a redemption that might not redeem, and declaring a salvation that might not save.

I could not go and say to a man, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And he would ask me, "Do you think you are going to heaven?" "Yes." "Why?" "Because Christ died for me." "But He died for us all, and my chances therefore are as good as yours." And he might reply to me after he had accepted my declaration, and after he had believed, and begun to rejoice, after all he might say,

“Is there any real reason why I should rejoice, some for whom Christ died are in hell, and I may also go there. I cannot begin to rejoice in your news till I feel myself in glory. It is rather a faulty piece of good news, because it is nothing positive. It is a grand uncertainty you have proclaimed to me.”

Now, what we preach, is the Gospel to every creature, and that we take to be this—If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved. If you do not, you will be lost, and lost forever. You are not redeemed—you are not saved—there is not, in another word, salvation and redemption for you. Because I cannot say that there is salvation and redemption for those who are lost forever.

But we add, “We are what we are by divine grace. We have believed. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be as we are—will be able to boast as we do, humbly in the Lord our God.” Or in other words—If you believe, and are baptized, you will be saved. If you do not believe, you will be lost, and lost forever.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.