

A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE AND A BODY OF DIVINITY

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**A SERMON
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*“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”
1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10.*

IN Thessalonica the conversions to the faith were remarkable. Paul came there without prestige, without friends, when he was in the very lowest condition, for he had just been beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, and had fled from that city. Yet it mattered not in what condition the ambassador might be; God, who works mighty things by weak instruments, blessed the word of His servant Paul. No doubt when the apostle went into the synagogue to address his own countrymen he had great hopes that, by reasoning with them out of their own Scriptures, he might convince them that Jesus was the Christ. He soon found that only a few would search the Scriptures and form a judgment on the point, but the bulk of them refused, for we read of the Jews of Berea, to whom Paul fled from Thessalonica, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Paul must have felt disappointed with his own countrymen; indeed, he often had cause to do so. His heart was affectionately warm toward them, but their hearts were very bitter towards him, reckoning him to be a pervert and an apostate. But if he seemed to fail with the Jews, it is evident that he was abundantly successful with the Gentiles. These turned from their idols to serve the living God, and their turning was so remarkable that the Jews charged Paul and Silas with turning the world upside down.

In those days there was a good deal of practical atheism abroad, and therefore the wonder was not so much that men left their idols, as that they turned unto the living God. It became a matter of talk all over the city, and the Jews in their violence helped to make the matter more notorious, for the mobs in the street and the attack upon the house of Jason all stirred the thousand tongues of rumor. Everybody spoke of the sudden appearance of three poor Jews, of their remarkable teaching in the synagogue, and of the conversion of a great multitude of devout Greeks, and of the chief women not a few. It was no small thing that so many had come straight away from the worship of Jupiter and Mercury to worship the unknown God, who could not be seen, nor imaged, and to enter the kingdom of one Jesus who had been crucified. It set all Macedonia and Achaia wondering, and as with a trumpet blast it awakened all the dwellers in those regions. Every ship that sailed from Thessalonica carried the news of the strange ferment which was moving the city, men were caring for religion, and were quitting old beliefs for a new and better faith. Thessalonica, situated on one of the great Roman roads, the center of a large trade, thus became a center for the gospel. Wherever there are true conversions there will be more or less of this kind of sounding forth of the gospel. It was especially so at Thessalonica, but it is truly so in every church where the Spirit of God is lifting up men from the dregs of evil, delivering them from drunkenness, and dishonesty, and uncleanness, and worldliness, and making them to become holy and earnest in the cause of the great Lord. There is sure to be a talk when grace triumphs. This talk is a great aid to the gospel. It is no small thing that men should have their attention attracted to it by its effects, for it is both natural and just that thoughtful men should judge of doctrines by their results, and if the most beneficial results follow from the preaching of the word, prejudice is disarmed, and the most violent objectors are silenced.

You will notice that in this general talk the converts and the preachers were greatly mixed up—“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you.” I do not know that it is possible for the preacher to keep himself distinct from those who profess to be converted by him. He is gladly one with them in love to their souls, but he would have it remembered that he cannot be responsible for all their actions. Those who profess to have been converted under any ministry have it in their power to damage that ministry far more than any adversaries can do. “There!” says the world, when it detects a false professor, “this is what comes of such preaching.” They judge unfairly, I know, but most men are in a great hurry, and will not examine the logic of their opponents, while many others are so eager to judge unfavorably, that a very little truth, or only a bare report, suffices to condemn both the minister and his doctrine. Every man that lives unto God with purity of life brings honor to the gospel which converted him, to the community to which he belongs, and to the preaching by which he was brought to the knowledge of the truth, but the reverse is equally true in the case of unworthy adherents. Members of churches, will you kindly think of this? Your ministers share the blame of your ill conduct if ever you disgrace yourselves. I feel sure that none of you wish to bring shame and trouble upon your pastors, however careless you may be about your own reputations. Oh, that we could be freed from those of whom Paul says, “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.” When these are in a church they are its curse. The Thessalonians were not such, they were such a people that Paul did not blush to have himself implicated in what they did. He was glad to say that the outsiders “show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.”

Quitting this line of thought, I would observe that these two verses struck me as being singularly full. Oceans of teaching are to be found in them. A father of the church in the first ages was known to cry, “I adore the infinity of Holy Scripture.” That remark constantly rises from my lips when I am studying the sacred Word. This book is more than a book—it is the mother of books, a mine of truth, and a mountain of meaning. It was an ill-advised opinion which is imputed to the Muslims at the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, when they argued that everything that was good in it was already in the Koran, and therefore it might as well be destroyed. Yet it is true with regard to the inspired Word of God, that it contains everything which appertains to eternal life. It is a revelation of which no man can measure; it compasses heaven and earth, time and eternity. The best evidence of its being written by an Infinite mind is its own infinity. Within a few of its words there lie hidden immeasurable meanings, even as perfume enough to sweeten leagues of space may be condensed into a few drops of oil of roses.

The first part of my text contains *a summary of Christian experience*. The second part contains *a body of divinity*. Here is ample room and verge enough. It is not possible to exhaust such a theme.

I. The first part of the text contains A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE, “What manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.” Here we have in miniature the biography of a Christian man.

It begins, first, with *the entering in of the word*—“What manner of entering in we had unto you.” When we preach the word you listen, and so far, the word is received. This is a very hopeful circumstance. Still, the hearing with the outward ear is comparatively a small matter, or, at least, only great because of what may follow from it. The preacher feels even with some who listen with attention that he is outside the door, he is knocking, and he hopes that he is heard within, but the truth is not yet received, the door remains shut, an entrance is not granted, and in no case can he be content to speak with the person outside the door, he desires an entrance for the Word. All is fruitless until Christ enters into the heart. I have seen the following, the door has been a little opened, and the man inside has come to look at the messenger, and more distinctly to hear what he may have to say. But he has taken care to put the chain on the door, or hold it with his hand, for he is not yet ready to admit the guest who is so desirous of entering. The King’s messenger has sometimes tried to put his foot in when the door has stood a little open, but he has not always been successful, and has not even escaped from a painful hurt when the door has been forced back with angry violence. We have called again and again with our message, but we have been as men who besieged a walled city, and were driven from the gates, yet we had our reward, for when the Holy Spirit sweetly moved the hard heart, the city gates have opened of their own accord,

and we have been received joyfully. We have heard the hearty cry, “Let the truth come in! Let the gospel come in! Let Christ come in! Whatever there is in Him we are willing to receive; whatever He demands we are willing to give; whatever He offers us we are glad to accept. Come and welcome! The guest chamber is prepared. Come and abide in our house forever!”

The truth has its own ways of entrance, but in general it first affects the understanding. The man says, “I see it. I see how God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. I see sin laid on Christ that it may not be laid on me, and I perceive that if I believe in Jesus Christ my sins are put away by His atonement.” To many all that is needed is that they should understand this fundamental truth, for their minds are prepared of God to receive it. Only make it plain and they catch at it as a hungry man at a piece of bread. They discover in the gospel of our Lord Jesus the very thing for which they have been looking for years, and so the truth enters by the door of the understanding.

Then it usually commences to work upon the conscience, conscience being the understanding exercised upon moral truth. The man sees himself a sinner, discovering guilt that he was not aware of, and he is thus made ready to receive Christ’s pardoning grace. He sees that to have lived without thinking of God, without loving God, without serving God was a great and grievous crime. He feels the offensiveness of this neglect. He trembles, he consents unto the law that it is good, and he acknowledges that, if the law condemns him, he is worthy to be condemned.

When it has thus entered into the understanding and affected the conscience, the word of God usually awakens the emotions. Fear is awakened, and hope is excited. The man begins to feel as he never felt before. His whole manhood is brought under the heavenly spell; his very flesh does creep in harmony with the amazement of his soul. He wonders and dreads, weeps and quivers, hopes and doubts, but no emotion is asleep, life is in all. When a tear rises to his eye he brushes it away, but it is soon succeeded by another. Repentance calls forth one after another of these her sentinels. The proud man is broken down; the hard man is softened. The love of God in providing a Savior, the unsearchable riches of divine grace in passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin—these things amaze and overwhelm the penitent. He finds himself suddenly dissolved, where before he was hard as adamant, for the word is entering into him, and exercising its softening power.

By and by the entrance is complete, for the truth carries the central castle of Mansoul, and captures his heart. He who once hated the gospel now loves it. At first he loves it, hoping that it may be his, though fearing the reverse, yet admitting that if it brought no blessing to him, yet it was a lovable and desirable thing. By and by the man ventures to grasp it, encouraged by the word that bids him lay hold on eternal life. One, who in digging his land finds a treasure, first looks about for fear lest someone else should claim it, soon he dares to examine his prize more carefully, and at length he bears it in his bosom to his own home. So it is with the gospel, when a man finds it by the understanding, he soon embraces it with his heart, and believe me, if it once gets into the heart, the arch-enemy himself will never get it out again. Oh, that such an entrance with the gospel might commence the spiritual life of all here present who are as yet unsaved.

What comes next? Well, the second stage is *conversion*. “They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how *you turned* from idols to serve the living and true God.” There came a turning, a decided turning. The man has come so far in carelessness, so far in sin and unbelief, but now he pauses, and he deliberately turns around, and faces in that direction to which up to now he had turned his back. Conversion is the turning of a man completely around, to hate what he loved and to love what he hated. Conversion is to turn to God decidedly and distinctly by an act and deed of the mind and will. In some senses we are *turned*, but in others, like these Thessalonians, we *turn*. It is not conversion to think that you will turn, or to promise that you will turn, or resolve that you will turn, but actually and in very deed to turn, because the word has had a true entrance into your heart. You must not be content with a reformation, there must be a revolution, old thrones must fall, and a new king must reign. Is it so with you?

These Thessalonians turned from their idols. Do you tell me that you have no idols? Think again, and you will not be quite so sure. The streets of London are full of fetish worship, and almost every dwelling is a temple crammed with idols. Why, multitudes of men are worshipping not calves of gold, but gold in a more portable shape. Small circular idols of gold and silver are much sought after. They are very devoutly worshipped by some, and great things are said concerning their power. I have heard the

epithet of “almighty” ascribed to an American form of these idols. Those who do not worship gold may yet worship rank, name, pleasure, or honor. Most worship self, and I do not know that there is a more degrading form of worship than for a man to put himself on a pedestal and bow down thereto and worship it. You might just as well adore cats and crocodiles with the ancient Egyptians as pay your life’s homage to yourselves. No wooden image set up by the most savage tribe can be more ugly or degrading than our idol when we adore ourselves. Men still worship Bacchus. Do not tell me they do not, why, there is a temple to him at every street corner. While every other trade is content with a shop or a warehouse, this fiend has his palaces, in which plentiful libations are poured forth in his honor. The gods of unchastity and vice are yet among us. It would be a shame even to speak of the things which are done of them in secret. The lusts of the flesh are served even by many who would not like to have it known. We have many gods and many lords in this land. God grant that we may see, through the preaching of the gospel, many turning from such idols. If you love anything better than God, you are idolaters, if there is anything you would not give up for God it is your idol, if there is anything that you seek with greater fervor than you seek the glory of God, that is your idol, and conversion means a turning from every idol.

But then that is not enough, for some men turn from one idol to another. If they do not worship Bacchus they become teetotalers, and possibly they worship the golden calf, and become covetous. When men quit covetousness they sometimes turn to immorality. A change of false gods is not the change that will save, we must turn unto God, to trust, love, and honor Him, and Him alone.

After conversion comes *service*. True conversion causes us “to serve the living and true God.” To serve Him means to worship Him, to obey Him, to consecrate one’s entire being to His honor and glory, and to be His devoted servant.

We are, dear friends, to serve the “living” God. Many men still have a dead God. They do not feel that He hears their prayers; they do not feel the power of His Spirit moving upon their hearts and lives. They never take the Lord into their calculations, He never fills them with joy, nor even depresses them with fear; God is unreal and inactive to them. But the true convert turns to the living God, who is everywhere, and whose presence affects him at every point of his being. This God he is to worship, obey, and serve.

Then it is added, to serve the *true* God, and there is no serving a true God with falsehood. Many evidently serve a false god, for they utter words of prayer without their hearts, and that is false prayer, unfit for the true God, who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. When men’s lives are false and artificial they are not a fit service for the God of truth. A life is false when it is not the true outcome of the soul, when it is fashioned by custom, ruled by observation, restrained by selfish motives, and governed by the love of human approval. What a man does against his will is not in truth done by himself at all. If the will is not changed the man is not converted, and his religious life is not true. He that serves the true God acceptably does it with delight, to him sin is misery, and holiness is happiness. This is the sort of service which we desire our converts to render; we long to see rebels become sons. Oh the sacred alchemy of the Holy Spirit, who can turn men from being the slaves of sin to become servants of righteousness!

Carefully notice the order of life’s progress. The entering in of the word produces conversion, and this produces service. Do not put those things out of their places. If you are converts without the word entering into you, you are unconverted, and if professing to receive the word you are not turned by it, you have not received it. If you claim to be converted, and yet do not serve God, you are not converted, and it you boast of serving God without being converted, you are not serving God. The three things are links which draw on each other.

A fourth matter follows to complete this Christian biography, namely, *waiting*—“To wait for His Son from heaven.” That conversion which is not followed up by waiting is a false conversion, and will come to nothing. We wait, dear brethren, in the holy perseverance of faith, having begun with Christ Jesus our Lord we abide in Him, we trust, and then we wait. We do not look upon salvation as a thing which requires a few minutes of faith, and then all is over; salvation is the business of our lives. We receive salvation in an instant, but we work it out with fear and trembling all our days. He that is saved continues to be saved, and goes on to be saved from day to day, from every sin and from every form of evil. We must wait upon the Lord, and renew the strength of the life which He has imparted. As a servant waits on her mistress, or a courtier upon his king, so we must wait upon the Lord.

This waiting also takes the shape of living in the future. A man who waits is not living on the wages of today, but on the recompenses of a time which is yet to come, and this is the mark of the Christian, that his life is spent in eternity rather than in time, and his citizenship is not of earth but of heaven. He has received a believing expectancy which makes him both watch and wait. He expects that the Lord Jesus will come a second time and that speedily. He has read of His going up into heaven, and he believes it, and he knows that He will so come back in like manner as He went up into heaven. He looks for the Second Advent with calm hope. He does not know when it may be, but he keeps himself on the watch as a servant who waits his Lord's return. He hopes it may be today, he would not wonder if it were tomorrow, for he is always looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God. The coming of the Lord is his expected reward. He does not expect to be rewarded by men, or even to be rewarded of God with temporal things in this life, for he has set his affection upon things yet to be revealed, things eternal and infinite. In the day when the Christ shall come, and the heavens which have received Him shall restore Him to our earth, He shall judge the world in righteousness, and His people with His truth, and then shall our day break and our shadows flee away. The true believer lives in this near future, his hopes are with Jesus on His throne, with Jesus crowned before an assembled universe.

The convert has come to this condition; he is assured of his salvation. See how he has been rising from the time when he first held the door ajar! He is assured of his salvation, for Paul describes him as one who is delivered from the wrath to come, and therefore he looks with holy delight to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Once he was afraid of this, for he feared that Jesus would come to condemn him, but now he knows that when the Lord appears his justification will be made plain to the eyes of all men. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." And so he cries, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!" He would hasten rather than delay the appearing of the Lord. He groans in sympathy with travailing creation for the manifestation of the sons of God. He cries with all the redeemed host for the day of the Savior's glory. He could not do this were he not abundantly assured that the day would not seal his destruction, but reveal his full salvation.

Here, then, you have the story of the Christian man briefly summed up, and I think you will not find a passage of merely human writing which contains so much in so small a compass. It has unspeakable wealth packed away into a narrow casket. Do you understand it? Is this the outline of your life? If it is not, the Lord grant that His word may have an entrance into you this morning that you may now believe in Jesus Christ and then wait for His glorious appearing.

II. I shall want you to be patient with me while I very briefly unfold the second half of this great roll. Here even to a greater degree we have *multum in parvo*, much in little, A BODY OF DIVINITY packed away in a nutshell. "To wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come."

To begin my body of divinity, I see here, first, *the Deity of Christ*. "To wait for His Son." "His Son." God has but one Son in the highest sense. The Lord Jesus Christ has given to all believers, power to become the sons of God, but not in the sense in which He, and He alone, is the Son of God. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten you?" "When He brings in the First-begotten into the world He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" The Eternal Filiation is a mystery into which it is better for us never to pry. Believe it, but how it is, or how it could be; certainly it is not for you or for me to attempt to explain. There is one "Son of the Highest," who is "God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before all worlds," whom we with all our souls adore, and acknowledge to be most truly God, doing so especially every time in the benediction we associate Him with the Father and with the Holy Spirit as the one God of blessing.

Side by side with this in this text of mine is *His humanity*. "His Son, whom He raised from the dead." It is for man to die. God, absolutely considered dies not, He therefore took upon Himself our mortal frame, and was made in fashion as a man, then willingly for our sakes He underwent the pangs of death, and being crucified, was dead, and so was buried, even as the rest of the dead. He was truly man, "of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting," of that we are confident. There has been no discussion upon that point in these modern times, but there was much questioning thereon in years long gone, for what is there so clear that men will not doubt it or mystify it? With us there is no question either as to His Deity, which fills us with reverence, or His manhood, which inspires us with joy. He is the Son of God and the Son of Mary. He, as God, is, "immortal, invisible," and yet for our sakes He was seen of

men and angels, and in mortal agony yielded up the ghost. He suffered for our salvation, died upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, being verily and truly man.

Notice a third doctrine which is here, and that is *the unity of the Divine Person of the Lord*, for while the apostle speaks of Christ as God's Son from heaven, and as one who had died, he adds, "even Jesus," that is to say, one known, undivided Person. Although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. There is but one Person of our blessed and adorable Lord, "one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person." He is God, He is man, perfect God and perfect man, and as such, Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. There have been mistakes about this also made in the church, though I trust not by any one of us here present. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ in the unity of His divine Person as the one Savior of men.

Furthermore, in our text we perceive a doctrine about ourselves very plainly implied, namely, that *men by nature are guilty*, for otherwise they would not have needed Jesus, a Savior. They were lost, and so He who came from heaven to earth bore the name of Jesus, "for He shall save His people from their sins." It is clear, my brethren that we were under the divine wrath, otherwise it could not be said "He has delivered us from the wrath to come." We who are now delivered were once "children of wrath, even as others." And when we are delivered it is a meet song to sing, "O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comforted me." We were guilty, otherwise we had not needed propitiation by the Savior's death, we were lost, otherwise we had not needed one who should seek and save that which is lost, and we were hopelessly lost, otherwise God Himself would not have shared our nature to work the mighty work of our redemption. That truth is in the text, and a great deal more than I can mention just now.

But the next doctrine, which is one of the fundamentals of the gospel, is that *the Lord Jesus Christ died for these fallen men*. He could not have been raised from the dead if He had not died. That death was painful, and humiliating, and it was also substitutionary, "for the transgression of My people was He stricken." In the death of Christ lay the essence of our redemption. I would not have you dissociate His life from His death, it comes into His death as an integral part of it; for as the moment we begin to live we, in a sense, begin to die, so the Man of Sorrows lived a dying life, which was all preparatory to His passion. He lived to die, panting for the baptism with which He was to be baptized, and reaching forward to it. But it was especially, though not only, by His death upon the cross that Jesus put away our sin. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Not even the tears of Christ, nor the labors of Christ could have redeemed us if He had not given Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice. "He die, or justice must," or man must die. It was His bowing His head and giving up of the ghost which finished the whole work. "It is finished" could not have been uttered except by a bleeding, dying Christ. His death is our life. Let us always dwell upon that central truth, and when we are preaching Christ risen, Christ reigning, or Christ coming, let us never so preach any of them as to overshadow Christ crucified. "We preach Christ crucified." Some have put up as their ensign, "We preach Christ glorified," and we also preach the same, but yet to us it seems that the first and foremost view of Jesus by the sinner is as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Therefore do we preach first Christ crucified, while at the same time we do not forget that blessed hope of the child of God—namely, Christ in glory soon to descend from heaven.

The next doctrine I see in my text is *the acceptance of the death of Christ by the Father*. "Where is that?" you ask. Look! "Whom He raised from the dead." Not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but the Father had a distinct hand therein. God as God gave the token of His acceptance of Christ's sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. It is true, as we sometimes sing—

***"If Jesus had not paid the debt,
He never had been at freedom set."***

The Surety would have been held in prison to this day if He had not discharged His suretyship engagements, and wiped out all the liabilities of His people. Therefore it is written, "He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." In His glorious rising from the dead lies the assurance that we are accepted, accepted in the Beloved, the Beloved being Himself certainly accepted because God brought Him again from the dead.

Further on, we have another doctrine, among many more. We have here the doctrine of *our Lord's resurrection*, of which we spoke when we mentioned the acceptance of His offering. Christ is risen from

the dead. I pray you; do not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as though He were now dead. It is well to dwell upon Gethsemane, Golgotha, and Gabbatha, but remember the empty tomb, Emmaus, Galilee, and Olivet. It is not well to think of Jesus as forever on the cross or in the tomb. "He is not here, but He is risen." You may "come and see the place where the Lord lay," but He lies there no longer, He has burst the bands of death by which He could not be held, for it was not possible that God's holy One could see corruption. The rising of Jesus from the dead is that fact of facts which establishes Christianity upon a historical basis and at the same time guarantees to all believers their own resurrection from the dead. He is the first fruits and we are the harvest.

Further, there is here the doctrine of *His ascension*, "to wait for His Son from heaven." It is clear that Jesus is in heaven, or He could not come from it. He has gone before us as our Forerunner. He has gone to His rest and reward. A cloud received Him out of sight; He has entered into His glory.

I doubt not our poet is right when he says of the angels—

*"They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
"The glorious work is done!"*

That ascension of His brought us the Holy Spirit. He "led captivity captive, and received gifts for men," and He gave the Holy Spirit as the largess of His joyous entry to His Father's courts, that man on earth might share in the joy of the Conqueror returning from the battle. "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in," was the song of that bright day.

But the text tells us more, not only that He has gone into heaven, but that *He remains there*, for these Thessalonians were expecting Him to come "from heaven," and therefore He was there. What is He doing? "I go to prepare a place for you." What is He doing? He is interceding with authority before the throne. What is He doing? He is from yonder hilltop looking upon His church, which is as a ship upon the sea buffeted by many a storm. In the middle watch you shall see Him walking on the waters, for He perceives the straining of the oars, the leakage of the timbers, the rending of the sails, the dismay of the pilot, the trembling of the crew, and He will come to us, and save us. He is sending heavenly succors to His weary ones; He is ruling all things for the salvation of His elect, and the accomplishment of His purposes. Glory be to His blessed name!

Jesus is in heaven with saving power, too, and that also is in the text, "His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." I alter the translation, for it is a present participle in the case of each verb, and should run, "Even Jesus, delivering us from the coming wrath." He is at this moment delivering. "Wherefore also He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." He is away in heaven, but He is not divided from us, He is working here the better because He is there. He has not separated Himself from the service and the conflict here below, but He has taken the post from which He can best observe and aid. Like some great commander who in the day of battle commands a view of the field, and continues watching, directing, and so winning the fight, so is Jesus in the best place for helping us. Jesus is the master of legions, bidding His angels fly here and there, where their spiritual help is needed. My faith sees Him securing victory in the midst of the earth. My God, my King, You are working all things gloriously from Your vantage ground, and before long the groans and strifes of battle shall end in Hallelujahs unto the Lord God Omnipotent! Christ's residence in the heavens is clearly in the text.

Here is conspicuously set forth *the second coming*, a subject which might well have occupied all our time—"To wait for His Son from heaven." Every chapter of this epistle closes with the Second Advent. Do not deceive yourselves, oh you ungodly men who think little of Jesus of Nazareth! The day will come when you will change your minds about Him. As surely as He died, He lives, and as surely as He lives He will come to this earth again! With an innumerable company of angels, with blast of trumpet that shall strike dismay into the heart of all His enemies, Jesus comes! And when He comes there shall be a time of judgment, and the rising again of the dead, and "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." He may come tomorrow! We know not the times and the seasons, these things are in the Father's keeping, but that He comes is certain, and that He will come as a thief in the night to the ungodly is certain too. Lay no flattering

anointing to your souls as though when He was crucified there was an end of Him; it is but the beginning of His dealings with you, though you reject Him. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

A further doctrine in the text is that *Christ is a deliverer*—“Jesus delivering us from the wrath coming.” What a blessed name is this! Deliverer! Press the cheering title to your breast. He delivers by Himself bearing the punishment of sin. He has delivered, He is delivering, He always will deliver them that put their trust in Him.

But there was something to be delivered from, and that is, *the coming wrath*, which is mentioned here. “Oh,” says one, “that is a long way off, that wrath to come!” If it were a long way off, it is wise for you to prepare for it. He is unsafe who will be destroyed most certainly, however distant that destruction may be. A wise man should not be content with looking as an ox does, as far as his eyes can carry him, for there is so much beyond, as sure as that which is seen. But it is not far-off wrath which is here mentioned, the text says, “who delivers us from the wrath coming.” That is, the wrath which is now coming, for wrath is even now upon the unbelieving. As for those Jews who had rejected Christ, the apostle says of them in the sixteenth verse of the next chapter, “Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” The siege of Jerusalem and the blindness of Israel are a terrible comment upon these words. “Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” It is said of everyone that believes not in Christ Jesus, that “the wrath of God abides on him.” “God is angry with the wicked every day.” This wrath abides upon some of you. It is the joy of believers that they are delivered from this wrath which is daily coming upon unbelievers, and would come upon them if they had not been delivered from it by the atoning sacrifice.

There is evidently in the text the doctrine of *a great division* between men and men. “He has delivered us.” All men have not faith, and therefore all men are not delivered from wrath. Today there is such a division, the “condemned already” and the “justified” are living side by side, but before long the separation shall be more apparent. While some will go away into everlasting punishment, the people of God will be found pardoned and absolved, and so will be glorified forever.

Lastly, there is here the doctrine of *assurance*. Some say, “How are you to know that you are saved?” It can be known, it ought to be known. “Surely,” cries one, “it is presumption to say that you are sure.” It is presumption to live without knowing that you are delivered from wrath. Here the apostle speaks of it as a thing well known, that “Jesus delivers us from the wrath coming.” He does not say “if,” or “perhaps,” but he writes that it is so, and therefore he knew it, and we may know it. My brothers and sisters, you may know that you are saved. “That would make me inexpressibly happy,” cries one. Just so, and that is one of the reasons why we would have you know it this day. God says, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life,” and therefore the believer may be sure that he has it. Our message is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.” God make you to escape that dreadful doom! May you be delivered from the wrath which is coming for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 17:1-10;
1 THESSALONIANS 1.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—485, 483, 484.**

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