

JOY IN A RECONCILED GOD

NO. 1045

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
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*“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
by whom we have now received the atonement.”*
Romans 5:11.

OUR text begins with these words, “And not only so.” It is the second time in which they occur in the chapter, I might almost have said the third, for a similar expression is used in another verse. The apostle had been mentioning very great and amazing privileges; he had gone from great benefits to yet greater; he had advanced, I might say, from silver to gold, and from gold to the priceless crystal; and when he had reached the highest point that we could have thought to be conceivable, he adds, “And not only so.” There is always in Christian privilege a beyond. The ancient mariners spoke of the pillars of Hercules and the Ultima Thule, and they supposed that when once their sails had whitened the sea in that direction they had come to the end of the universe and could go no further; but, more venturous ships forced their way to a new world, and proved that the former boundaries were imaginary. Even so we may have concluded in the early days of our Christian experience that we never could be happier, that we never could enjoy greater privileges, that there could not be greater treasures than we had discovered; but even at the present time we have pushed far beyond our young attainments, and are preparing for yet more far-reaching endeavors. We have not yet attained. Far be it from us to imagine that we are or have all that the Lord intends. Let us not sit down contented with the notion that the gospel contains no more, for rest assured, to him who is able to follow after it there are whole worlds of privileges yet to be discovered. We are only at the foot of the mountain as of yet. We may take for our motto the words, “Higher, higher, higher,” and may soar aloft again and again on eagles’ wings, for heaven is higher than our loftiest flight. At the end of all we have known and experienced there may be written, “And not only so.” A nobler future allures us, a higher line of spiritual things invites us; let us by faith and patience press forward to it. The borders of Immanuel’s land have yielded us choice fruit, but the inner valleys are rich with Eshcol clusters, and the brooks in the heart of the country overflow with milk and honey.

The present passage indicates a high attainment in *spiritual* life, when the soul learns not only to rejoice in salvation, which is an early experience, or to rejoice in tribulation, which is a far riper fruit, but advances even beyond that, and learns to make her joy, her glory, and her boast in God, in God alone. “And not only so, but we also joy in God.” There is the point of elevated experience of which the apostle speaks with such confident familiarity; it certainly touches the confines of heaven, if it is not altogether heaven; this is the joy of angels, and of spirits purified from all stain; they joy in God. Yet this is an attainment possible to us *here*. I might confine my thoughts to that subject, but it might be for profit if I use the text in another way: embracing that thought and making it the main topic of discourse, but taking a somewhat wider range. My text seems to me to describe the progress of a soul towards God. There is the first step visible in it, though somewhat in shadows, and rather implied than expressed. The second step is very clear; it is “receiving the atonement,” or more correctly “the reconciliation.” The third step shines in a yet brighter light—having received the reconciliation, “we joy in God.” And so we complete our fellowship with Him, and ascend to an elevation which, if it is not in heaven, lies in the confines of it.

I. Our text shadows out, by implication at any rate, THE FIRST STEP OF A SOUL IN COMING TO GOD. It lies *here*. We begin to be conscious that God is angry with us. The text declares that we have received the reconciliation; there was, therefore, a time when we had *not* received it, and before we

could receive it, we were made sensible that we *needed* it; and before we could be conscious of that need, we were led to see that from necessity of His nature, God must be angry with such sinful creatures as we were. It is the dawn of divine grace in the soul, when the heart perceives that there is a holy God, and that such a God cannot be on terms of amity with an unholy thing like itself. God is not angry with men arbitrarily because He chooses to take a dislike to them; oh, no, God is *necessarily* angry with evil because He is holy, and pure, and good. A being who has no anger against evil has no love towards goodness. This is one mark of righteousness—that it of necessity takes fire and burns with indignation against unrighteousness.

Now, I may preach this truth of God to this present congregation and many, when they hear my words, will carelessly inquire, “Well, and what concern is that of ours? What does it matter?” But, if God’s grace has begun a work in any heart, *that* soul will say, “Alas, alas, how true it is! How could the great lawgiver in the heavens allow me to break His laws with impunity? How could He be God and yet smile on sin? How could He be worthy of the seraphic song, ‘holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth,’ and yet look with complacency upon one so unholy, so depraved, so unrighteous as I am by nature?” The awakened soul perceives that unless God could cease to be God, He could not look with complacency upon sin, nor upon the sinner, either, as long as sin lies upon him. This is a discovery which is very painful but very simple; one would think that every man ought to see this fact, but no man does see it till the Spirit of God convinces him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment—and even *then* the natural heart endeavors to shut its eyes to it. That God is angry with us for sin is so unpleasant a thought that the convinced sinner would, if he could, escape from it; he would willingly take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, that he might escape from his dread of divine wrath for sin; but there is no land of peace for such a soul! A guilty conscience will follow a man like his shadow; it will dog his footsteps; it will embitter his food; it will disturb his sleep; it will molest his waking hours. Neither will he be content till by some better method than forgetting it, he shall have escaped from its force. The avenger of blood never ceases to pursue the manslayer till he has gained the city of refuge. That God is justly and of necessity angry with him as a sinner, is a thought which haunts every convinced person. If I believed that God were angry with me simply out of arbitrary whim, and that He might not be angry with me if He chose, my heart would harden itself like steel in enmity against Him! But, when it comes home to me that He is rightly angry with me; that if I were God I would be angry with such a one as I am; that if I could be perfectly holy as God is I would be equally indignant as God is with sin; then my soul feels the sting of wrath! Its justice cuts my conscience to the quick, and makes my heart bleed. It is a blessed thing when the heart is thus awakened from its fatal slumber; for then there is hope that it will seek out the divinely appointed way of escape from sin!

A second degree of this same step is a consciousness that we are, at enmity with God; we will not believe that our heart is opposed to God though the preacher often warns us that it is so, and though the Word of God teaches the same; we will not be brought to admit that our heart is at war with the Lord. “Why,” says one, “I pay respect to God, and go to a place of worship; therefore *I* am not at enmity with Him.” Only when the Spirit of God comes, do we discover that there is in our heart, latent to a great extent, but also very readily developed, an enmity against the living God. Then a man starts, and is astonished at himself; he asks, “Why is it that thoughts of God are unpleasant to me? Why is His day so long, His worship so wearisome, and His Bible so dull to me? It must be because I do not love the Lord.” In very deed, if a proclamation were made that God had ceased to be, or was no longer holy and just, there are many who would count it the best of news! Alas, man would gladly make an end of his Maker! The awakened heart inquires, “Is it really so that I am a deicide, and would, if I could, blot God out of existence, and have no God because then I should be at peace? Is it, indeed, so?” When the Spirit of God makes the man confess that *it is* so, then he is amazed, indeed, for he did not know, before, how far he had fallen! Now, I am certain that if I could assure you upon solid grounds that there was no God, and consequently no need of repentance, and no fear of punishment; and consequently no need of pardon through the blood of Christ—it would make many of my hearers feel much relief, and give them great ease of mind! Even very respectable and moral people would say, “Now we have got out of that difficulty about the new birth, atonement, heaven and hell in a very short and easy manner, and upon the whole we are glad about it.” But, to some of us, such information would be the most awful tidings possible, for

the very fact that there is a God who is a righteous governor, and that there is a way of righteous pardon through the precious blood, is our joy and our gladness, now that we are reconciled to God! While you are not reconciled, there is an enmity within you which the deceitfulness of your heart will not let you see; but when you are brought to see it, and to sorrow for it, it will be one of the steps by which God will lead you to Himself. We need you, dear unconverted hearers, to see clearly that there is a quarrel between God and you! On God's side there is a righteous disagreement with you because He could not agree with you and be holy, and, on your side an unrighteous and wicked opposition to Him because His thoughts and ways—God's laws—are too pure, too just, and too good for you.

A further portion of this same step, (and I pray every hearer who is seeking God to see whether he knows anything about it), is the perception that in order to perfect reconciliation with God, there must be something done God-ward, and there must be something done man-ward. That is to say, something offered to God by which the insult and injury done to His most holy and righteous law shall be recompensed; and, next, a thorough change in us before we can walk with God in perfect communion. If God were to forgive sins outright and make no more ado; and if He were to receive us into heaven, itself, yet, as long as our nature is what it is, we should carry a hell within our own souls, and heaven would be to us misery emphasized. While we are Unrenewed, and our nature remains contrary to God, the nearer we could get to God, if that were possible, and the more of God's love we could perceive, if that were possible, the more intensely wretched we should become! In order to reconciliation it is not enough that one party should be forgiving; the other must yield, too; if the aggrieved party on his part should go all the way towards reconciliation, it may only encourage the other to further evil unless he desires reconciliation, too. So you perceive that in order to reconciliation between a sinner and God, the sinner must be brought into a different state of heart; he must in fact *repent*, or, more fully, he must be born-again.

One other part of this first step I must mention—a soul upon whom the Spirit of God is thus operating begins to desire to be reconciled to God. “O God,” he says, “You are angry with me; can Your anger be turned away? Is there a sacrifice? Is there atonement? If there is, I beseech You, turn Your face of kindness towards me, and have pity upon me. And, O Lord, I know that in my bosom there is an evil heart which departs from You; I beseech You, renew me! It is true the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots, but surely You who made me at the first, can make me anew. O my great Creator, could You not make me anew? Would You not quench in me the fire of enmity against Yourself, and make me yet to be Your friend? And, whereas these two things stand in the way: Your anger and my enmity, can You not make a clean sweep of both? At one stroke can You not both justify me, and regenerate me so that I may walk with You, and be agreed with You?” This is the dawn of grace, and a blessed dawn it is! How thankful am I if these words are reaching the ears of men who are undergoing this sacred process! Of old, when the world was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and it is written, “There was light.” We find the next effect was *order*, and the next was *life*, and then a fair wind arose beneath the brooding wings of the ever-blessed Dove. Oh, may He come forth now in like manner! May He bring light into your souls, though this should cause you to painfully perceive the disorder of your nature; and may He then turn your chaos into order, your death into life, and your deformity into the beauty of holiness to the praise of the glory of His grace! This is but the first step, but it is one for which to be devoutly grateful if the Holy Spirit has led us to take it.

II. Secondly, the text sets forth before us in the far clearer light of actual statement A SECOND STEP. “We have now received the “*at-one-ment*.” The word “atonement” is a very improper translation here. It is the only case in which our translators have used the word at all in the New Testament, and it is very unfortunate that they should have used it in the wrongs place, because the word is as plainly as possible, *reconciliation*, and does not so much refer to the atonement by which the reconciliation is made as to the reconciliation itself. I believe that here our excellent translators used the word in the sense of “at-one-ment,” or bringing two together. We have “received” an “at-one-ment”; we are made to come into oneness with God through Jesus Christ. Now, the second step God-ward, and the truly vital one, is *receiving the reconciliation*.

Observe how we are reconciled. It is not by working out reconciliation. Please observe that. The first instinct of man when he finds himself with an angry God gazing upon him, and with enmity in his own

heart towards God, is to set to work to try and better this state of things. “What shall I *do*? How shall I avert the divine anger?” The heart suggests a multitude of expedients; sometimes it runs into the enchantment and fascination of ceremonialism, but more commonly among us it falls back upon its own natural self-righteousness and dreams of reconciliation by amendment, and by future carefulness, and by a diligent obedience *in the future* which it hopes to be able to render. Now, observe, the text does not say that *we* have made any atonement for sin, neither does any Scripture ever tell us that we can do so, or that by any good deeds of our own we are to be reconciled to God! I tell you, awakened souls, that all your struggles to be reconciled to God apart from Christ are only another form of the rebellion of your hearts against God; you are evidently opposed to Him because you reject *His* plan of reconciliation, and in defiance of His will, you make a pretense of offering to be reconciled on other terms than those which He ordains. While talking of peace, you insult the Lord, again, by rejecting the blood of His Son, which is the *only* atonement! From the top of Sinai, amidst the smoke and burning of His awful presence, He forbids you to draw near, and He sets bounds about the mountain. But your daring reply is, “By this mountain I will approach God; I will break the barriers, and climb Sinai’s rocky sides.” Your attempt is vain! The fire of His law will devour you, for this is not the way, neither is this the road by which God can permit a sinful soul to approach Him; if He did accept a sinner in his own righteousness, it would be an insult to the righteousness of Christ! If He should admit a sinner into His favor by any door but faith in His dear bleeding Son, it would be to make a liar of Himself! It would make void all His promises, and do despite to the cross of Jesus! No, we *receive* the reconciliation—there is the meat of the matter; we do not make it, we *receive* it!

I would like to dwell on that blessed word a little while—“We have now received the atonement.” We do not buy it; we receive it without money and without price; we do not complete it, we receive it. “It is finished,” was the verdict pronounced upon it long before we were born. We did not assist in commencing it, nor can we add anything to it; neither is there any need that we should wish to do so; we *receive* reconciliation. It is a free gift. We have only to put out our hand and take it; we have only to be empty vessels to be filled with it; we receive it perfect. Oh, that precious word, “receive”! How well it suits all cases; a person may be very poor, but I never yet met a person who was too poor to *receive*—in fact, it is the poor man who is the most willing and ready to receive! When the pitcher is empty, it is in the fittest state to receive, for when it is full it cannot receive! And the lower, the more humble, the more broken, the more ruined, the more condemned—I was almost about to say the more near being damned—the more fit you are to receive divine grace! I put it as strongly as I can in order that any here who are despairing may lay hold of it. If you are emptied to the last drop, and cannot find a trace of a footstep of anything good in you—why then you are ready to *receive*! Surely, if you have nothing, you are the very man who can receive what Christ has provided!

Let me explain the process of receiving reconciliation. It begins thus—the man, being already on the first step, knowing that he needs reconciliation, believes the truth about the gospel. Now the gospel *is* that reconciliation! It is made for every soul that believes in Jesus; it is a great mercy when a man becomes clear about that, and accedes to it as God’s truth. God is not reconciled to anybody who will not believe in Christ, but He is reconciled to every soul that trusts in Jesus. No wrath remains against a believer in Jesus; to such, God is all love and tenderness. All sinners who receive Christ by faith, He is a true and effectual substitute; He suffered in their place and bore, that they might never bear, the divine wrath that was due to sin. Now be very clear about this, for though we preach it every Sunday, we still have need to repeat it. Many teach that Christ has made an equal atonement for *all* men; but, since a great number of men are lost, it is evident that their guilt was not effectually removed, neither were they actually reconciled; if those men were all reconciled to God, and yet were cast into hell, there is little to be desired in so useless a reconciliation! An atonement for *all* which does not *save all* is not, in itself, an effectual atonement! It is clear that if it of itself saved one for whom it was offered, it would save all—the same cause, if complete within itself, would always produce the same effect; an atonement said to be universal is also admitted to be ineffectual unless all are reconciled to God by it. The fact is, there is no redemption worth having but the *particular redemption* by which the Lord Jesus redeemed His own people only, that is to say, made for all who believe in Him an effectual sacrifice. Now, if you can receive that truth of God cordially, it will mightily help you—God is only reconciled to every *believer*.

Then, the next step to receiving is to become a believer, because then the man is reconciled! How can I become a believer? Why, of course only by believing! And what is to believe? The other word for it, is, "trust." Jesus Christ made a full, satisfactory, substitutionary atonement for every soul that trusts in Him. I trust Him, therefore I know that He has made a full satisfaction for me; I received the reconciliation the moment I trusted Him; I have believed God's record concerning His Son, that He is able to save me, and I know for that reason—and I do not need any other reason—that I am reconciled to God and God to me! There is the long and the short of the actual process of reconciliation by faith. The soul becomes consciously reconciled to God, yet further, when peace flows into the soul as the result of the conviction that God is reconciled through Jesus Christ. My heart feels, this morning, perfect reconciliation with God, because I know that whatever my sins may have been and I know they are far more than I think them to be—they were all laid upon Christ's head upon Calvary, and whatever punishment was due to me for my sins, Christ has borne on my behalf. How do I know that He bore *my* sins in particular? Is it because I think He bore the sins of all men? By no means! That would give me no comfort, because some men are lost, and I might be among them; and if Jesus bore the sins of *all* men, it is clear that His bearing sin in that sense is not in every case effectual. But, when I know that He so bore the sins of *believers*—that they are clear, and I am also certain that I am a believer, then I feel the most profound peace of mind. Search my soul through and through, and there is not a more honest thought in my nature than this—that I rest on Christ alone! Very well, then, my sins are forgiven me since they were laid on Jesus, and they cannot be in two places. If Christ took them, they are not on me; Jesus was punished for them, and God cannot punish two individuals for one and the same sin. If He laid my sin upon my substitute, He cannot lay it upon me; God is not unrighteous to forget Christ's labor of love for me; He cannot demand payment twice—first at the bleeding Savior's hands, and then again at mine! O you heavens, was there ever heard of such a monstrous injustice as for Christ to be a substitute for a sinner, and then that sinner to be punished after Christ was punished in His place? It cannot, must not, shall not be even thought of! It is an atrocious blasphemy! I have God's Word for it, that Jesus died for believers—then am I sure He died for me, and I cannot be condemned! The peace which that belief sheds over the mind is wondrous; there is no peace like it!

Out of this there arises reconciliation to God more and more deep and happy, for the Spirit of God, from time to time, more and more opens up to the believer the work of Christ. He shows him that this work was no novelty, that it was no mere expedient invented late in the day, but that eternal love had laid out this plan before the clouds were weighed, or the mountains were created. Then the Holy Spirit reveals the all-sufficiency of the true sacrifice of God. What merit there must be in the death of one who is divine! What a boundless extent of overflowing mercy there must be in the pangs and groans of One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a Servant for our sakes! Every believer here will bear me witness that the more fully he understands the work of the Lord Jesus, the deeper is his peace, and, consequently, the fuller is his sense of reconciliation to God.

Then, brothers and sisters, being persuaded of all this, our heart drops her former enmity to God. "What?" says the man; "Has the Lord really forgiven me all, and has He forgiven me by giving up His Only-Begotten Son for my sake? Did He take Him from His bosom, whom all heaven adored, and give Him up for *me*? How can I oppose Him any longer? I yield, and gladly call Him Lord!" Then our love is enraptured with His blessed character, and we magnify Him with our whole heart; we adore as much His justice as His mercy; we love His holiness as well as His grace, for we see all blended in the person of the Only-Begotten. We learn to bless God that He is angry with sin! We would not have Him otherwise; we bless Him that He did require satisfaction, for there ought to be a penalty exacted lest sin, through being condoned without punishment, should be lightly thought of both by men and other races of intelligent beings. We thank God that He is just what He is, and we would not have Him changed in any degree or manner! Ever since by faith we met the Lord on Calvary's bloody tree, and shook hands over the great sacrifice for sin, all our enmity is slain; if the old lusts within us dare rebel, we proscribe them as traitors, and call in the aid of heavenly power to subdue them! Our inmost heart is now at one with God—in its very deeps we feel a delight in Him!

Thus I have shown you the second step, or receiving the reconciliation.

III. BY THE THIRD STEP we get into the brightest light—“We joy in God”; He becomes our highest and loftiest joy. I must take you back a step for a minute. No man ever rejoices in God except the man who receives the atonement by Jesus Christ. Suppose a man should say, “I do not need atonement; I am a good man and always have been; I have not broken the law.” Well, friend, I will tell you what is according to nature, and what I am certain is the fact—you will rejoice in *yourself*! I know if I were half as good as you say *you* are, I would rejoice in myself, indeed! If I had kept the law from my youth up, and had never broken one of the commandments of God, I assure you I would boldly say, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are! I have kept Your law! I have done no sin in thought, word, or deed!” I would rejoice in myself! Dear friends, you will never know anything of what it is to rejoice in God while you are self-righteous; neither does any man rejoice in God who feels that he has obtained reconciliation with God by his own self-reforms. Reforms are admirable, and I would not say a word against them, but, suppose a man who was once far from God were able to boast that he refined himself into fellowship with God—in whom, do you think, would *he* rejoice? Why, in *himself*, certainly! Did I hear a man say, “I have had moral courage and resolution enough to make myself all I ought to be; I have brought myself up from the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and this is no small thing”? My dear man, you are a fine fellow; let me pat you on the back! What? Do you say that you don’t need to be patted on the back? Don’t be angry, I quite agree with you! *You* do that quite sufficiently for yourself, and I should do the same if I had so much to say for myself as you have! Why should I care to rejoice in God? Samson crying, “heaps upon heaps” is nothing to a man fighting in his own strength, and conquering all his spiritual foes. Why, my valiant friend, when you get to heaven, you will throw your cap up and say, “Glory be to myself!” No doubt you will, if ever you get there! No, joy in God never could result from a man’s saving himself; the only way a man comes to joy in God is by receiving reconciliation by divine grace, and I think that is clear to any thoughtful mind. If there is anything of our own of merit, or endeavor which can bring us into a state of reconciliation with God, then we shall rejoice in it. But if there is nothing of our own, and we have simply to stand still and *receive* salvation, and take it all as a matter of the free grace of God through Jesus Christ—then we joy in *God*!

Let me dwell on this for a moment. The moment a man is reconciled to God, his view of God alters entirely. Have you not noticed how your opinions of persons will vary? A neighbor has done you a displeasure, and, therefore, you do not esteem him; very likely that person is a very excellent man, but you read everything he does in the evil limit of suspicion; if he meets you with frank courtesy, you think him a fawning hypocrite, and if he passes you by, you set it down to haughty contempt. If he should offer to serve you, you would suspect that he wished to place you under a humbling obligation, and if he stands aloof, you feel sure that he gloats over your necessities! His name is no sweet sound to your ears, and you have no joy in him; if, however, by a discovery of his kindness you escape from prejudice, his whole conduct wears another aspect! When a soul becomes reconciled to God by the way of the cross, as I have described, then its whole mind with regard to God alters. And from that moment it reads Him aright, and understands Him, and delights in Him!

I will show you wherein a soul which is reconciled to God delights in Him: first, in His very existence and person. That there is a God is to the Christian supreme bliss! “Oh,” he says, “what should I do without my God? The infidel may say there is no God, but if that were true, I should have lost my Father, my friend, my all.” The Christian feels that his hope of prevailing over injustice and wrong lies in the fact that there is a reigning God who will set all things right at last; his hopes for preservation and sustenance spring from God’s being the source of all life, and the giver of all good gifts to His people. If there were a place in the world where God never came, no Christian would ever go there! But, if there is a spot where God peculiarly reveals Himself, beloved brothers and sisters, is not that where you would delight to meet? And since we believe there is to be a fuller revelation of Himself in heaven, is not that our main reason for longing to be there? Not because the angels are there, or because the harps of gold ring out superior melodies, but because we shall *be with God*, and shall be like He! Oh, yes, I do but speak your inmost hearts when I say you joy in the very existence of God; as loyal subjects rejoice that they have a king; as affectionate children rejoice that they have a father; as a loving spouse rejoices that she has a husband, so do we, but infinitely beyond all this, rejoice that we have a God!

Next, we rejoice in His character. All the attributes of God are themes of joy and rejoicing to a Christian. “Why,” he says, “He is a merciful God; blessed be His name for that, else I had never been saved! He is a gracious God; glory be to Him for that, for He can save the souls of my children by His grace; He is a powerful God, and I would not have Him otherwise. This, indeed, is a well of joy.”—

*“The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas;
This amazing God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down
His heavenly powers
To carry us above!”*

We are glad that we have a God who can do all things on our behalf! The Lord is also immutable, and oh, what a sun of consolation *that* is—without variableness or shadow of a turning! I shift and change like the winds and the waves, but He is always the same! Many a fainting believer has drunk from this fountain when all others have failed him. Moreover, the Lord is faithful to His promises; what a joy is this! And He is holy, and just, and good—here, too, is joy, for if He is holy, He cannot do an unrighteous action, and it were unrighteous of Him not to save His people for the sake of His anointed! Every attribute of God darts thunder and lightning upon an unreconciled man, and, on the other hand, every part of the divine character smiles with eternal sunlight upon a spirit which has received the atonement.

Beloved, when we come to joy in God’s person and attributes, we further learn to glory in His sovereignty. Before our reconciliation we quibble at the divine will; if there is one doctrine in the world which reveals the enmity of the human heart more than another, it is the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. Men will bear with you unto that word, but when they hear the Lord’s voice saying, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” they gnash their teeth, and call the preacher an Antinomian, a High Calvinist, or some other hard name! They do not love God unless they can make Him a *little* god! They cannot bear for Him to be supreme! They would gladly take His will away from Him, and set up their own will as the first cause, and say, “These are your gods, O Israel.” But the moment we are reconciled to God, we consent that Jehovah should do as He wills! What better rule could be than the absolute empire of love? What can be better as a government for all mankind than the absolute authority of one so good, so true, so holy, and so just? Set up a limited monarchy in the universe; yes, it were proper enough if the devil were the ruler—but with God for the King, we need no check upon His superlative justice, and immaculate holiness! He cannot do unrighteously or unmercifully; He must act according to His nature, and His nature and His name are love. Let love reign without limit! Let love be sovereign! Let love bear the keys of government upon her shoulder, and let her name be called the Mighty God. Much of men’s hatred to the doctrine of sovereignty is rooted in their enmity to the sovereign Himself—but when the heart is reconciled to God we can read the sternest passages of the 9th of Romans, or any other Scripture, and say, “Amen, so let it be! What God ordains must be right.”

When the soul becomes reconciled to God, again, it joys in God under all His dispensations. Of course we joy in God under comfortable dispensations; there is no question whether we do not, then, very much divide our joy between the comforts and God. But in dark times, when the comforts all go, we can joy in God if we can act as David did at Ziklag—when they spoke of stoning him, when his goods and his wives were gone, and all his followers’ wives, too, David “Encouraged himself in his God.” “Oh,” he said to the soldiers round about him, “do not fret. It is true we are beggars, but we have not lost our God! Let us sing a psalm to His praise.” Then might they have sung, “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice,” while they sharpened their swords to strike the foe.

Beloved, I will only add these two or three thoughts. Joy in God is the happiest of all joys. There are other sweets, but this is the virgin honey dropping fresh from the comb. Joy in God is also a most elevating joy. Those who joy in wealth grow greedy; those who joy in their friends too often lose nobility of spirit; but he who boasts in God grows like God! It is a solid joy, and he who joys in God has good rea-

sons for rejoicing; he has arguments which will justify his joy at any time; he who rejoices in God shall never be confused or ashamed, world without end; it is an abiding joy. If I rejoice in the sun, it sets; if in the earth, it shall be burnt up; if in myself, I shall die. But to triumph in one who never fails, and never changes, but lasts forever—this is lasting joy! In a word, it is celestial joy. It flows like the river of God which rises at the foot of His throne, and waters the celestial streets, while trees on either side bear all manner of fruits. Blessed is the man whose nature strikes its roots deep into the banks of this river; he shall bring forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper.

The only sad reflection is, and with that I close, that there are so many who know nothing about joy in God. They could never gaze upon yon stars and say, “My God, You have made all these, and I love You; I love You not as I fancy You are, but as You have said You are in the Scripture; I would not alter Your nature if I could; I would not tempt You by saying, ‘Do not this or that.’ Whatever You do I admire, for I am reconciled to You, and I joy in You.” When Mungo Park looked at that little piece of moss growing in the desert where he was lost, he thought, “God is here taking care of that little moss,” and his heart was full of gladness! I know a Christian woman who was in great family trouble, and was near despairing, but she saw a little feather on the floor which the draft of air from under the door blew to and fro, and the thought came into her mind, “God knows the motion of every filament of that feather, and He is moving it; God is here.” And all her sorrow disappeared, and she rejoiced in God! Did you ever feel like that? You know how your child feels when you put it to bed; as long as its mother is there, it does not cry, but when she goes, it is sad. Did you ever feel towards God as the child does to its parent? At this moment my soul is lying on God’s bosom, and I am happy; God is mine and I love Him; oh, how I love Him!

You unconverted ones cannot say that. I wish you could, for if you are unreconciled to God, your state is a very perilous one, and at the same time a very mean one. I would not like to be at enmity with a good man who had always shown me kindness; I would not like to feel that I did not love good men. I must be a wretch if I do not respect and love the only perfect being! If I am good for anything, I shall be pleased to call the good my friends. Look at yourselves in that light and see, Sinners, what mean creatures you are. I pray you may say, “We will not be so mean any longer; we will be at peace with God.” There is only *one* way of reconciliation, and that is you must receive the atonement Christ Jesus worked out by His death; that way is most suitable to you, and I hope you will agree with it at once. Oh, may the Spirit of God make you put out your receiving hand. Is it palsied? Does it quiver and shake? Never mind! A palsied hand is sufficient to *receive* with! I have seen many a shivering beggar beg in the streets, but he could always receive; I have never found his hand too feeble for *that*! Put forth that trembling hand and take the Savior by trusting in Him! The moment you trust Him, you are saved! God is reconciled to every soul that trusts Christ. May God grant that you may feel the power of the reconciliation by His Holy Spirit. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 5:1-11; ISAIAH 12.

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