

A MEDIATOR NO. 2180

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 23, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.”
Galatians 3:20.*

THE text does not strike you as difficult, but it is exceedingly perplexing to the interpreter. I was looking at one very old commentator who is a great favorite of mine and I noticed that he said that there were 250 different meanings given by expositors to this verse. John Prime, in 1587, called it, “an endless labyrinth.” “Oh,” I thought, “here is a nice wood to lose oneself in! Two hundred and fifty meanings!” Turning to a more modern author, a great reader, however,, he said he believed that more than 400 different interpretations had been put upon the passage. This was getting from a wood into a forest—a black forest, where one might lose himself hopelessly! Should I preach from such a text? Yes, but I must not worry you with these many interpretations. Some of them cannot be correct. Some of them are, no doubt, nearly accurate. What does the passage mean? I will not venture to say that I know, but I will venture to say that I know how to use it for a practical purpose. If the Spirit of God will help us, we shall find our way, by a very simple clue, to the practical meaning and make use of the words for our soul's profit.

A mediator! What is a mediator? A mediator is a middleman, a go-between—one who comes in between two parties who otherwise could not commune with each other. Take the case of Moses. God's voice was very terrible and the people could not bear it, so Moses came in and spoke on the behalf of God. The presence of Jehovah upon the mountain was so glorious that men could not climb the hill and endure that great sight; so Moses went up for men to God. He was a mediator, speaking for the Lord, and making intercession for the people. This is what Paul alludes to when he speaks of the law being, “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” And here the apostle lets slip a sort of general statement—a truth of God which does not seem to be in connection with anything that goes before, or anything that follows after. He lays this down as a general rule—“A mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” Paul has gold dust—his every thought is precious. He is looking at one object, and talking about it, and meanwhile he strikes a stone with his foot and lays bare a vein of gold! As if he did not notice the treasure, he passes on and leaves that vein of gold for you and for me. He is very fond of digression. It is the style of Paul and the style of every man who is very full and running over. He keeps to one argument, but he sees many others. While he is running towards the goal, he lets fall golden apples in the form of general principles which occur to him at the time. I understand Paul here, not as going on with any argument, but as letting fall a general principle which I, taking it out of its connection, hope to use for our profit tonight. A mediator, a go-between, an interposer, is not a mediator of one, that is clear; but God is one. What shall we learn from this?

I. First, A MEDIATOR IS NOT FOR GOD ALONE. A mediator deals with *two* persons—with God and man. A mediator does not come because God needs, Himself, any kind of mediator. He is eternally one and if you view Him as the sacred Trinity, yet He is a Trinity in unity; God is one. Some persons call themselves Unitarians who have no exclusive right to the name. All Trinitarians are Unitarians—though we believe that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, yet we confess that there are *not* three gods, but one God. Now, between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit there is no difference, no ground for contention; and therefore no mediator is needed to reconcile the divine persons. God is one: therefore our God does not need the mediator for Himself. Who is the mediator

needed for, then? Why, for somebody else! That somebody else is here tonight and I want to find him out. A mediator! Blessed be God, there is a mediator, but God does not need Him for His personal purposes! *There is another person for whom the mediator is required.* Where is that other person? In the very gift of Christ as a mediator, in the sending of Him in His divine and human nature—in Christ's life, in Christ's death—God had an eye to another party. God, looking out beyond Himself to somebody else, provided a mediator. That ought to be a great thought to you, for if God is looking out of Himself, why should He not look at *you*? If God has so looked out of Himself as to provide a mediator that must mean that He is thinking of a creature who needs one. O my soul, may He not be thinking of you? Though you have wandered from Him and lived for many years without Him, may it not be that as there is a mediator and that mediator cannot be for God alone, for God is one, that mediator may be intended to meet my need and bring me back to God?

Now, according to the run of the text and according to the run of Scripture, *that other party, for whom a mediator is sent, is man.* Man has fallen out with God. Man is at enmity with God, and God is necessarily angry with man, for He cannot but hate sin and He must punish evil. God, therefore, is looking out on man, and here am I tonight, sitting in the house of prayer; is He looking on me? God desires fellowship with men! God would have men brought near to Him—why should not I, then, be brought near? Why should I live at a distance? Here is a mediator—that mediator cannot be for God alone, for God is one—He must be meant for a second person. May not I be that person? Let me lift my eyes to heaven, and say, “O gracious Lord, grant that I may be that other person for whom this mediator is concerned!” For a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one, and would have me to be the second, that there may be work for a mediator to do! That is clear enough.

II. Now go a step further. In the second place, A MEDIATOR IS NOT FOR PERSONS WHO ARE AGREED WITH EACH OTHER. A mediator is not needed for persons of one heart and of one soul. I need no mediator between myself and my brother, between myself and my son, between myself and my wife. We are perfectly at one already and no mediator is needed. So, then, it is clear that if there is a mediator, it is for two persons between whom *there is some ground of difference.* Mark well this truth of God and understand it. I am not going to say pretty things, or use fine words, yet I say to those of you who long to be saved—understand what I am saying, for it will help you! A mediator! That must be for persons between whom they and God there is ground of quarrel. Sinner! Sinner, this is good news for you! A mediator is not for a man who is perfectly at one with God, but for *you*, who has by many sins provoked God! For you who by the sinfulness of your nature stand at a distance from Him! There is need of a mediator between you and the thrice-holy God; and it is for such as *you* that a mediator has appeared! Do you understand this truth of God? A mediator is not a mediator between those who are at one. He is a mediator between persons who differ; and that is the case with you as to your God!

III. A mediator also comes when THERE IS A GROUND OF DIFFERENCE WHICH CANNOT READILY BE RESOLVED, for if the ground of difference is trivial and the two parties are willing to be agreed, they soon settle the matter. A mediator, an arbitrator, is brought in when the case is hard. Such is your case and mine by nature. We have sinned. God is just. He is full of compassion and willing to forgive as far as the slight is against His person, but He is also King and Judge of all the earth, and He must punish sin. If He does not punish sin, He will be unjust and the injustice which does not punish sin is cruelty to all righteous men. If our judges were tomorrow to say to every thief, housebreaker, murderer, “Go your way, you are forgiven,” it would be kindness to *them*, but it would be cruelty to *us*. It would not be true mercy on the part of God to pass by sin without punishment. He could not occupy His throne as the guardian of right and the protector of virtue if He did not execute judgment upon sin. Here, then, we perceive a barrier between God and the guilty—God must punish offenders, and man has offended. How can these two be brought together? Here steps in the mediator, one of a thousand, who can lay His hand upon both—settle this deadly feud and make eternal peace! A mediator is not for those who are at one, but for those who have a ground of difference which cannot be readily removed.

IV. In this case, if there is any wish on the part of the offending one to be reconciled, it may be done, for the offended God is willing to be at peace. **THERE WOULD BE NO USE IN A MEDIATOR UNLESS THE PARTIES WERE BOTH WILLING TO BE RECONCILED TO EACH OTHER.** A mediator who comes in between two who have a continued hatred simply wastes his time. But in our case God is willing to be reconciled. “Fury is not in Me,” He says. But man is not willing to be reconciled to God until divine grace changes his heart. If there is, on your part, a wish to end your quarrel and to be friends with God, you will be happy to know that there is a mediator. Jesus stands waiting to remove the barrier that divides you from God and to reconcile you to God by His own death.

There must, however, in order for a mediator, an umpire, be *a willingness on both sides to leave the matter in his hands*. There must be a difference which they cannot remove, a difference which they wish to have removed and a difference which they are willing to leave in the umpire’s hands. God is willing to leave our matter with Christ. He has done so. He has laid help on One that is mighty. He has qualified and commissioned Him to come as an ambassador and make peace between Him and guilty men. On your part, are you willing to hand the matter over to Christ entirely, to do what He bids you, to admit to what He would have you confess, to repent wherein He tells you you are wrong, to seek to be right wherein He warns you that you have failed? Will you give your case over to the mediator and make Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be your representative in the business? God trusts His honor in the hands of His Son Jesus. He is not afraid to leave everything that concerns His moral government and His royal character in the hands of the Well-Beloved. Will you trust your soul’s eternal interests in those same dear pierced hands? If so, rejoice that there is a mediator between two parties that have long been alienated—a mediator between God and you! Take Him to your heart tonight!

V. Now we will go a step further. A mediator is not a mediator of one, but **HE STUDIES THE INTERESTS OF BOTH PARTIES.** Such is our Lord Jesus Christ. Coming here on earth, did He come to save men? Yes. Did He come to glorify His Father’s name? Yes. For which of these two purposes did He chiefly come? I will not say. He came for both and He blends the two. He looks after the interests of man, and pleads the causes of his soul—He looks after the interests of God, and vindicates the honor of God even unto death. Is He obedient that He might magnify the law of God and make it honorable? Yes, but He is mediator that He may deliver us from the curse of the law. Beloved, our blessed mediator is not a mediator for one! An umpire must not take sides, and a mediator that did not understand more than one side and was not concerned for but one side, would be unworthy of the name. Our mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, has both natures. Is He God? Verily, He is very God of very God. Is He man? Assuredly, of the substance of His mother, as truly man as any man among us! Is He more God, or is He more man? This is a question not to be asked, and, therefore, not to be answered. He is my brother. He is God’s Son. Yes, He is Himself, God. What better umpire can we want than this divine human being who can lay His hands upon us both? He counts it not robbery to be equal with God and yet calls man His brother! Our mediator is not a mediator of one since He wears both natures and espouses both causes. Oh, how dear to the heart of Christ is the glory of God! He lives, He dies, He rises again to glorify the Father! Oh, how dear to Christ is the salvation of men! He lives, He dies, He rises again and pleads for the salvation of sinners! He has the enthusiasm of humanity, but He has the enthusiasm of divinity as well. God must be glorified—our mediator will die to do it! Man must be saved—He will die to do it! What a splendid mediator, who is not a mediator of one, but a mediator who takes up the cause of both sides!

VI. In this capacity, **OUR BLESSED MEDIATOR PLEADS FOR BOTH WITH BOTH**—for He is not a mediator of one. A mediator, when he would make peace, goes to this one and he states the case. And he urges him and pleads with him. When he has done that, he returns to the other party and states the other side. He pleads with the one on the behalf of the other. Even so our Lord Jesus Christ comes in between God and man. Oh, how wonderful! He pleads with God for sinners, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And then he turns round and pleads with sinners for God and bids them turn to Him and be reconciled to Him, since He is their Father and their friend! A mediator is not a

mediator of one. He who should come in and pretend to be a mediator, and then throw all the blame on one party, and care only for the interests of the other party, would not be a mediator, but a partisan! But, in this case, here is One who has something to say, not in vindication, or excuse for sin, but in pleading for mercy to the sinner! He has something to say to magnify the justice of God and yet He cries for mercy. He prays, "Have mercy, O God! Have mercy upon the guilty!" I think that I have got the run of this text, somehow, if I cannot give you the exact meaning of the words. This meaning lies hidden within the words—a mediator is not for one, but he studies the interests of both.

VII. It is, then, most clear that A MEDIATOR MUST HAVE TWO PARTIES TO DEAL WITH or else his office is a mere name. An umpire is chosen to keep order between two sets of people, but if only one set shall put in an appearance, you may go home, Mr. Umpire. There is evidently nothing for you to do. "A mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one."

Now, tonight my Lord is here to be a mediator. God is willing to be reconciled to men, but if there is nobody here to be reconciled—if the preaching of tonight has no relation to anybody here—then it is quite clear that the office of Christ cannot be exercised. He cannot be a mediator unless there is a sinner here to be reconciled. Where is he? My Lord the mediator holds His court tonight, and sits here as an ambassador; but what can He do unless there is another party? Unless I can discover the offender, the guilty one; and unless, discovering him, the Spirit of God shall bring him to say, "I wish to be reconciled to God, and I put my case into the hands of the great interposer"? If there is no sinner in the world, then there is no Savior in the world! How can He save if men are not guilty and do not need saving? I tell you, sinner, you are necessary to Christ's doing any business! A man is a surgeon and puts a brass plate outside his door. Go and tell him that there is nobody ill in the parish. Prove to him that within 10 miles there is nobody who has so much as a cold or a toothache; the good man may take down his brass plate, and go and spend a month in the country! It breaks a doctor up if everybody remains healthy! Now, if tonight everybody here has kept God's law, and is innocent, guiltless, and fully at one with God, my Master has no mission here, nor have I. I have no need to speak of Him to you, for, "they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." Therefore I come forth in the name of the mediator to ask whether there is not some sinner here who will confess his guilt; some enemy of God who will ask for peace! Is there not here some giddy young man who has lived without God until now, who will pray to be reconciled to Him? If so, you make work for my Master! You give Him something to do in that divine office of mediator in which He takes such a delight.

And mark you this: in the case of a mediator, or umpire, the more difficult the case, the greater is the honor that comes to him if he can settle it. If there is a very stiff quarrel between you and God, I commend to you my Lord as mediator, for He never failed yet to settle any dispute and at this time He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Solomon was great in handling hard matters, but a greater than Solomon is here! If your life is all in a tangle and a snarl, He can put it straight! If your differences with God are too solemn and weighty to be stated in words; if they press your life out of you; if they rob you of sleep; if they bring you down to hell's door—yet still my Lord the mediator can settle every difference, and make peace between your soul and God! Are you willing that He should exercise His office for you? If so, the worse your case, the greater will be the credit that will come to my Lord as mediator when He has removed every difficulty for you!

Do not be afraid because there are so many sinful ones here and such great numbers of you are still the enemies of God! I do not only invite *one* of you to come, but I would say: Come all, and the more the merrier! My Lord will have the greater honor if He composes this quarrel in hundreds of cases, all varying and all grievous! You may come, the whole of you, and He will not shut His door against you! If you go to see some eminent doctors of this city, you must get there early in the morning and wait almost till night before your turn comes round, but there will be no waiting with my Lord and Master! If you wish to be friends with God, the mediator is ready to settle the difference and to send you away happy in the love of the Most High.

“But may I come?” asks one. May you come? When Christ sets up to be a mediator, why should you not use Him as a mediator? I do not ask the doctor’s pardon when, feeling ill, I knock at his door! He has put up his name as one that is willing to deal with the sick and therefore I seek him. I take no liberty in coming. If he has undertaken an office, let him do his office. Poor guilty wretch; afraid to come to God? Behold Christ puts up the name of mediator with intent that He should be used as such! He is the way of access to the Father! Come and use Him for what He professes to be. Believe that He is able to do what, by His name and His official title, He claims to do! Now come and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, His Son the mediator!

I have been nearly 40 years now trying to preach. I cannot get at it yet. Oh, that I knew how to put this so as to move every soul to come to God and sue for peace! How willing must God be to be at peace with men when He provides a mediator between Himself and them! How readily ought you to come when Christ’s honor and glory depend upon men’s trusting their problems in His hands! I ask again, what is a mediator if no case is trusted to him? A king without a crown, a shepherd without a flock, a farmer without land, a physician without sick people—these are all in a poor plight. And Christ without sinners, where is He? His name is an empty thing, and His glory gone! Come, then, you chief of sinners, come to Christ and leave your problems with Him!

VIII. But I close by noticing that, although it is necessary, when the mediator begins, that there should be two parties—for he is not a mediator of one, and God is one—yet when the case ends, A MEDIATOR MUST MAKE THE TWO ONE, OR HE HAS NOT SUCCEEDED. Our Lord Jesus has broken down the middle wall of partition. He has really reconciled those who stood apart. Christ has done this for so many that I should like you, sitting in the gallery to ask, “Why should not He do it for me?” Hung up in Christ’s private chamber there is a record of millions of quarrels between men and God that He has settled. Why should He not have your name among them? Why should He not end the quarrel between you and God? Why should He not reconcile you to the Father, so that the Father should give you the kiss of peace? He has never failed in a case yet! Some of the very worst cases have been submitted to His arbitration and He has always succeeded. They know not in heaven of a single defeat of our Lord; and the gloomy shades of hell cannot reveal a single failure on the part of Christ, in the case of one poor, condemned, guilty soul, that came to Him and said, “Make my peace with God.” He was never obliged to say, “I cannot do it.” There is no such instance! Come, my friend, if you have lived to be 80, an enemy to God, you may yet become His friend through this mediator! Come, my hearer, if you are young and full of vigor, and if your passions have led you far away from purity so that God may well quarrel with you, you may come at once, just as you are, and Christ will make up the quarrel between you and God! His pardoning blood can take away the guilt that angers God and the water which flowed with the blood from His dear pierced side can take away the propensity to rebellion within your own bosom! Surely I ought, by such words as these, to comfort some souls and lead them to Jesus!

Reconciliation, worked out by Christ, is absolutely perfect! It means eternal life! O my hearer, if Jesus reconciles you to God now, you will never quarrel with God again, nor God with you! If the mediator takes away the ground of feud—your sin and sinfulness; He will take it away forever! He will cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea, blotting out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your transgressions. He will make such peace between you and God that He will love you forever and you will love Him forever—and nothing shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. I have heard of some mend-all which so puts the pieces of broken plates together that the articles are said to be stronger than they were before they were broken. I know not how that may be. This I know: the union between God and the sinner reconciled by the blood of Jesus is closer and stronger than the union between God and unfallen Adam! That was broken by a single stroke; but if Christ joins you to the Father by His own precious blood, He will keep you there by the inflowing of His divine grace into your soul—for who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

One thing more I have to say. Remember, if you refuse the mediator whom God appoints, you do peremptorily refuse to be at peace with God. *You* could not have found a mediator—*you* cannot discover another now. There can be no other so every way suitable to come between us and God as the God-man, Christ Jesus bleeding on the cross to put away our sin and risen from the dead to proclaim that we are justified! Now, if God takes out of His own bosom His own Son, and gives Him up to die that He may make peace with us—and we *refuse* Him—we mean endless war with God! That is what it comes to. If you will not have Christ, you are baring your arms for an eternal conflict with the Almighty God! You are putting on your helmet and girding your sword to fight with your Maker. You are rejecting peace when you reject Christ. I am sure that it is so. You are choosing war with the Lord of hosts. Well, sirs, if you will have it, you must have it; but I would implore you to repent at once of your insane choice! HOW can you fight with God? WHY should you fight with God? To battle with God is to battle against your own best interests and to ruin your soul! Heaven, the only heaven that a creature can have, is to be at peace with his Creator. There is no peace unto the wicked. HOW can there be? The only hope that we can have is to be agreed with God. If He has made me, He has made me for a purpose. If I fulfill that purpose, I shall answer the end of my being and I shall be happy. If I do not fulfill that purpose, I must be unhappy; and in choosing to be the foe of God I have chosen my own eternal damnation! God help us to repent of such a choice, and may we now lay hold on Christ the mediator, and trust ourselves with Him, that He may make peace between us and God; and to His name shall be glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Galatians 3.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—433, 384, 369.

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