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FREE SALVATION.

J. C. Ryle

READER,

Of all the doctrines of the Bible there is none so important as that of free salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. "He that believeth on Jesus is not condemned." "By Him all that believe are justified from all things."

This is the cornerstone of all Christianity. A mistake here is fatal: it is a worm at the root: it is a defect in the foundation. Let a man get wrong on this point, and his whole religion will get into confusion; let a man be right on this point, and he will never wander very far from the path of truth.

This is the doctrine for which we should contend to the very death. We should cling to it for our own soul's peace; we should seek it in the public means of grace we use. Better a thousand times take away the sun from heaven than take out of Christianity *free forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ*.

This is the glorious doctrine that was the strength of the Apostles when they went forth to the Gentiles to preach a new religion. They began, a few poor fishermen, in a despised corner of the earth; they turned the world upside down; they changed the face of the Roman empire; they emptied the heathen temples of their worshippers, and made the whole system of idolatry crumble away. And what was the weapon by which they did it all? It was *free forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ*.

This is the doctrine which brought light into Europe 300 years ago, at the time of the blessed Reformation, and enabled one solitary monk, Martin Luther, to shake the whole Church of Rome. Through his preaching and writing, the scales fell from men's eyes, and the chains of their souls were loosed. And what was the lever that gave him his power? It was *free forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ*.

This is the doctrine that revived our own Church in the middle of last century, when Whitefield, and the Wesleys, and Berridge, and Venn broke the wretched spirit of slumber that had come over the land, and roused men to think. They began a mighty work, with little seeming likelihood of success; they began, few in number, with small encouragement from the rich and great: but they prospered. And why? Because they preached *free forgiveness through faith in Christ*.

This is the doctrine which is the true strength of any Church on earth at this day. It is not orders, or endowments, or liturgies, or learning, that will keep a Church alive. Let free forgiveness through Christ be faithfully proclaimed in her pulpits, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her: let it be buried or kept back, and her candlestick shall soon be taken away. When the Saracens invaded the lands where Jerome and Athanasius, Cyprian and Augustine once wrote and preached, they found bishops and liturgies, I make no question; but I fear they found no preaching of free forgiveness of sins: and so they swept the Churches of those lands clean away. They were a body without a vital principle, and therefore they fell. Let us never forget the brightest days of a Church are those when Christ crucified is most exalted. The dens and caves of the earth, where the early Christians met to hear of the love of Jesus, were more full of glory and beauty in God's sight than ever was St. Peter's at Rome; the meanest barn, at this

day, where the true way of pardon is offered to sinners, is a far more honourable place than the Cathedral of Cologne or Milan. A Church is only useful so far as she exalts *free forgiveness through Christ*.

This is the doctrine which of all others is the mightiest engine for pulling down the kingdom of Satan. The Greenlanders were unmoved so long as the Moravians told them of the creation and the fall of man; but when they heard of redeeming love, their frozen hearts melted like snow in spring. Preach salvation by the sacraments, exalt the Church above Christ, and keep back the doctrine of the atonement, and the devil cares little: his goods are at peace. But preach a full Christ and a free pardon, and then Satan will have great wrath, for he knows he has but a short time. John Berridge said he went on preaching morality, and nothing else, till he found there was not a moral man in his parish; but when he changed his plan, and began to preach the love of Christ to sinners, then there was a stirring of the dry bones, and a mighty turning to God. This is the only doctrine which will ever bring peace to an uneasy conscience, and rest to a troubled soul. A man may get on pretty well without it, so long as he is asleep about his spiritual condition; but once let him awake from his slumber, and nothing will ever calm him but the blood of atonement, and the peace of Christ. How any one can undertake to be a minister of religion without a firm grasp of this doctrine, I never can understand; for myself, I can only say, I should think my office a most painful one if I had not the message of free forgiveness to convey. It would be miserable work indeed to visit the sick and dying, if I could not say, "Behold the Lamb of God, —believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The right hand of a Christian minister is the doctrine of free forgiveness through faith in Christ. Give us this doctrine and we have power: we will never despair of doing good to men's souls. Take away this doctrine, and we are weak as water. We may read the prayers, and go through a round of forms, but we are like Samson with his head shorn; our strength is gone. Souls will not be benefited by us, and good will not be done.

Reader, I commend the things I have been saying to your notice. I am not ashamed of free pardon through faith in Christ, whatever some may say against the doctrine: I am not ashamed of it, for its fruits speak for themselves. It has done things that no other doctrine can do; it has effected moral changes which laws and punishments have failed to work,—which magistrates and policemen have laboured after in vain,—which mechanics' institutes and secular knowledge have proved utterly powerless to produce. Just as the fiercest lunatics in Bethlehem Hospital became suddenly gentle when kindly treated, even so the worst and most hardened sinners have often become as little children when told of Jesus loving them, and willing to forgive. I can well understand Paul ending his Epistle to the erring Galatians with that solemn burst of feeling: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14). The crown has indeed fallen from a Christian's head when he leaves the doctrine of justification by faith.

See now how you should ask yourself whether you have really received the truth which I have been dwelling on, and know it by experience. Jesus, and faith in Him, is the only way to the Father. He that thinks to climb into paradise by some other road, will find himself fearfully mistaken: other foundation can no man lay for an immortal soul

than that of which I have been feebly speaking. He that ventures himself here is safe: he that is off this rock has got no standing ground at all.

See too how you should seriously consider what kind of a ministry you are in the habit of attending, supposing you have a choice. You have reason indeed to be careful: it is not *all the same* where you go, whatever people may say. There are many places of worship, I fear, where you might look long for Christ crucified, and never find Him; He is buried under outward ceremonies,—thrust behind the baptismal font,—lost sight of under the shadow of the Church. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." Take heed where you settle yourself. Try all by this single test: "Is Jesus and free forgiveness proclaimed here?" There may be comfortable pews,—there may be good singing, there may be learned sermons; but if Christ's Gospel is not the sun and centre of the whole place, do not pitch your tent there; say rather with Isaac, "Here is the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb?" Be very sure this is not the place for your soul.

Reader, remember these things, and you will be wise. I have set before you the way of life; I have told you where pardon is to be found. Oh, beware, lest having been told of free forgiveness you should come short of it, and never embrace it yourself! Settle it down in your mind, that if you are willing to partake of this free salvation *the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive you, and save you.*

Does any man suppose that Jesus is not willing to see heaven filled? Do you think He does not desire to bring many sons to glory? Oh, but you little know the depth of His mercy and compassion, if you can think such a thought! He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem; He mourns over the impenitent and the thoughtless in the present day. He sends you invitations by my mouth this hour. He invites you to hear and live, to forsake the way of the foolish, and go in the paths of understanding: "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Oh, reader, if you never came to Christ for life before, come to Him this very day. Come to Him with the penitent's prayer for mercy and grace; come to Him without delay. Come and drink of the water of life; come and be freely saved.

If you are determined to have the world and the things of the world,—its pleasures and its rewards, its follies and its sins; if you must have your own way, and cannot give up anything for Christ and your soul; if this be your case, there is but one end before you. I fairly warn you,—I plainly tell you,—you will sooner or later come to the unquenchable fire of hell.

But if any man is willing to be saved, the Lord Jesus Christ stands ready to save him. "Come unto Me," He says, "weary soul, and I will give you rest. Come, guilty and sinful soul, and I will give you free pardon. Come, lost and ruined soul, and I will give you eternal life. Come and be freely saved."

Oh, reader, let this message be a word in season! Arise and call upon the Lord. Let the angels of God rejoice over one more saved soul; let the courts of heaven hear the good tidings that one more lost sheep is found. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

Diary

Lord's Days:

December

5th	–	Rev. S. Holland, West Houghton	Communion - p.m
12th	–	Pastor	
19th	–	Pastor	– Communion - a.m <i>After Church</i>

Fellowship

25th	–	Pastor	<i>Christmas Day Morning Service 10:00am</i>
26th	–	Pastor	

January

2nd	–	Pastor	– Communion - p.m
9th	–	Pastor	
16th	–	Pastor	– Communion - a.m
23rd	–	Pastor	
30th	–	Pastor	<i>After Church</i>

Fellowship

February

6th	–	Pastor	– Communion - p.m
13th	–	Pastor	
20th	–	Pastor	– Communion - a.m
27th	–	Rev. David Kay, Barnstable	

Pastor's engagements

Lord's Day 5th December-Bethsaida,Tenby

Lord's Day 27th Feb- Barnstable ,Devon.

Advance notice- Men's Fellowship-Thursday17th February.

News of the Fellowship

Church Fellowship Trip.

On Friday 27th August we went on our annual Church fellowship trip to Gloucester and visited sights connected with William Tyndale. The following is a report of our visit by Bethan Pfeiffer.

We departed on the bus at 9am on a warm and sunny morning on the 27th August.

The journey was pleasant, with a stop at the services for a toilet break and a drink. We arrived at Bristol after 11, visiting an old Baptist college which is now used by Bristol University. Inside the old college was a beautiful stained glass window depicting William Tyndale's life. Mr Edward Williams then explained to us what each window meant. The large window is made up of 12 individual windows, the first 4 depict Tyndale's vision for the translation of the Bible into English, with various images; vines, a city on a hill, the Holy Scriptures and palm fronds. The next 8 windows follow his life up until his martyrdom, which is shown in the last window.

After Mr Edward Williams gave us a brief account of Tyndale's life we boarded the bus and were taken to see William Tyndale's statue in Millennium Square. Lunch followed shortly after. Turkey and beef was available as well as a wholesome assortment of vegetables and cheesecake or fruit salad for dessert. This meal was laid out for us at Wesley College which will sadly be closing shortly.

The annual trip photo was taken on the steps of Wesley College before we got back onto the bus again for the next stage of the journey.

Our penultimate stop was at North Nibley where the intrepid ones among us climbed the hill which led to Tyndale's monument. Noteworthy among the few was Mrs Pam Hopkins who not only climbed the hill but beat some of the younger members up it! The view from the top of the monument was beautiful and well worth the climb. For the rest, tea, biscuits and hymn singing were enjoyed in a church nearby. For those who saw the monument there was time for a few hymns and a quick cup of tea before making our way to Cribbs Causeway for an hour of shopping.

The lovely weather was maintained throughout the day and at 9pm a rather worn and weary troop alighted from the bus outside the church, having enjoyed a blessed day of fellowship and learning about the life and endeavours of William Tyndale; a servant much used by God in the spread of the gospel.

Many thanks go to Edward and Susan for organising such an enjoyable day.

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Protestant truth Society

On Thursday evening the 14th of September we were pleased to welcome the Director of the Protestant Truth Society-the Rev. Jeremy Brooks. Mr Brooks has preached for us in the past to our profit. The meeting was arranged to coincide with the visit of the Pope. Mr. Brooks highlighted the distinctive nature of the Protestant Reformation from the life of Martin Luther. Friends gathered with us from other Churches.

At our September After Church Fellowship we sang some favourite hymns and practiced some tunes. We also had read an extract from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

Funeral Service

On Tuesday October 12th we paid our respects to our sister Mrs May Rabey. Her funeral service was held in the chapel. Mr. Pfeiffer took the text from Psalm 116 v5 "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints" His saints have been precious to the Lord from eternity past. He viewed them as precious when He came in the person of His Son to redeem them. They were precious to Him at Calvary. His love for them does not cease at death but He is with them then. On that final day His saints will be viewed then as His precious "jewels" (Malachi 3 v 17) We are thankful for the memory of May who was faithful to the Lord's cause at Peniel. We remember how she used to pray at the prayer meetings acknowledging the Lord's love for such a one as she. We were able to meet with family members after the service in the schoolroom. Thanks to those involved in serving those who came.

Baptismal service

A baptismal service was held on Friday 1st October when Miss Esther Munday testified to the Lord's work in her life. We were thankful for the loan of Lonlas Gospel Mission for the occasion. A good number of Esther's friends came and we pray that the Lord will speak to them. Again we are thankful to those who provided refreshments.

Men's Fellowship

On Thursday 21st we re-introduced the Men's Fellowship where Mr Higham spoke on David Jones of Llangan. About eighteen men gathered to be challenged by the life and ministry of such a favoured servant of the Lord. A power point presentation after the talk showed sites connected with this minister. There was an open time for discussion. The next meeting will be held, God willing, on Thursday 17th of February.

David Pfeiffer and family

It was good to have with us on the following Lord's Day the Pastor's son and his wife Bethan and their son (Mr and Mrs Pfeiffer's grandson) Owen John. David Pfeiffer is at present training for the ministry at London Theological Seminary.

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After Church Fellowship - October

At our after church fellowship we again sang hymns and Mr Pfeiffer broached the subject 'Why is it worth serving the Lord wholeheartedly in this our day?' Such a walk glorifies God, is a blessing to the soul, brings comfort, makes us useful to our fellow-men and will reap a rich reward. Mr Pfeiffer is happy to receive questions which could be dealt with on future occasions.

Young People's Meeting

On Friday November 5th the Young People held their annual bonfire night at the home of Dr and Mrs Munday. We had a fire, fireworks and a rich assortment of food including a bonfire chocolate cake.

Infrastructure

We hope to deal with the external church notice board soon.

Letter of thanks

Sunday 5th Sept

Dear Mr Pfeiffer,

I just wanted to write and express appreciation for the kind welcome we received at Peniel Green Congregational Church last weekend. Your congregation were so friendly and made us feel so at home-it was a delight to worship with you.

It was also exceptionally kind of your wife to offer hospitality to us in the event of wet weather -thankfully the Monday was better as you will remember!

May the Lord richly bless you as you labour for Him, preaching the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

With my best wishes to you all,
Rebecca Ramsbottom

**LETTERS OF C. H. SPURGEON TO REV. T. W. MEDHURST
BOROUGH, July 14, 1854.**

DEAR SIR,—I am glad that you have been able to write to me and state your feelings.

Though my hands are always full, it will ever give me joy to receive such notes as yours.

You ask me a very important question, "Are you one of God's elect?" Now, this is a question neither you nor I can answer at present, and therefore let it drop. I will ask you an easier one, "Are you a sinner?" Can you say "YES"? All say, "YES"; but then they do not know what the word "sinner" means.

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A sinner is a creature who has broken all his Maker's commands, despised His Name, and run into rebellion against the Most High. A sinner deserves hell, yea, the hottest place in hell; and if he be saved, it must be entirely by unmerited mercy. Now, if you are such a sinner, I am glad to be able to tell you the only way of salvation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus." I think you have not yet really understood what believing means. You are, I trust, really awakened, but you do not see the door yet. I advise you seriously to be much alone, I mean as much as you can; let your groans go up if you cannot pray, attend as many services as possible; and if you go with an earnest desire for a blessing, it will come very soon. But why not believe now? You have only 'to believe that Jesus is able and willing to save, and then trust yourself to Him.

Harbour not that dark suggestion to forsake the house of God; remember you turn your back on Heaven, and your face to hell, the moment you do that. I pray God that He will keep you. If the Lord had meant to destroy you, He would not have showed you such things as these. If you are but as smoking flax, there is hope. Touch the hem of His garment; look to the brazen serpent.

My dear fellow-sinner, slight not this season of awakening. Up, and be in earnest. It is your soul, your OWN soul, your eternal welfare, your Heaven or your hell, that is at stake.

There is the cross, and a bleeding God-man upon it; look to Him, and be saved! There is the Holy Spirit able to give you every grace. Look, in prayer, to the Sacred Three-one-God, and then you will be delivered.

I am, Your anxious friend, C. H. SPURGEON.

75, DOVER ROAD, August 7, 1854.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your letters have given me great joy. I trust I see in you the marks of a son of God, and I earnestly pray that you may have the evidence within that you are born of God.

There is no reason why you should not be baptized. "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Think very seriously of it, for it is a solemn matter. Count the cost. You are now about to be buried to the world, and you may well say, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness." The friends who were with you in the days of your carnal pleasure will strive to entice you from Christ; but I pray that the grace of God may be mightily manifest in you, keeping you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

I should like to see you on Thursday evening, after six o'clock, in the vestry.

I am, Yours faithfully, C. H. SPURGEON.

Prescribing some HELPS to godliness

By Thomas Watson

Question: But what shall we do, that we may be godly?

Answer: I shall briefly lay down some rules or helps to godliness.

1. Be diligent in the use of all MEANS that may promote godliness. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24). What is purpose, without pursuit? When you have made your estimate of godliness, pursue those means which are most expedient for obtaining it.

2. Take heed of the WORLD. It is hard for a clod of dust—to become a star. "Love not the world" (1 John 2:15). Many would like to be godly—but the honors and profits of the world divert them. Where the world fills both head and heart—there is no room for Christ. He whose mind is rooted in the earth, is likely enough to deride godliness. When our Savior was preaching against sin, "the Pharisees, who were covetous, derided him" (Luke 16:14). The world eats the heart out of godliness, as the ivy eats the heart out of the oak. The world kills with her golden darts!

3. Accustom yourselves to holy THOUGHTS. Serious meditation represents everything in its true color. It shows the evil of sin, and the luster of grace. By holy thoughts, the head grows clearer and the heart better: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto your testimonies" (Psalm 119:59). If men would step aside a little out of the noise and hurry of business, and spend only half an hour every day thinking about their souls and eternity, it would produce a wonderful alteration in them!

4. Watch your HEARTS. This was Christ's watchword to his disciples: "Watch, therefore" (Matt. 24:42). The heart will incline us to sin, before we are aware. A subtle heart needs a watchful eye. Watch your thoughts, your affections. The heart has a thousand doors to run out from. Oh, keep close watch on your souls! Stand continually on your watch-towers (Hab. 2:1). When you have prayed against sin, watch against temptation. Most wickedness in the world is committed for lack of watchfulness. Watchfulness maintains godliness. It is the edging which keeps piety from fraying.

5. Make spending your TIME a matter of conscience. "Redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16). Many people fool away their time, some in idle visits, others in recreations and pleasures which secretly bewitch the heart and take it away from

better things. What are our golden hours for—but to attend to our souls? Time misspent is not time lived—but time lost! Time is a precious commodity. A piece of wax in itself is not worth much—but when it is affixed to the label of a will and conveys an estate, it is of great value. Thus, time simply in itself is not so considerable—but as salvation is to be worked out in it, and a conveyance of heaven depends on using it well—it is of infinite concern!

6. Think of your SHORT STAY in the world. "We are here for only a moment, visitors and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace!" (1 Chron. 29:15). There is only a span between the cradle and the grave. Solomon says there is a time to be born and a time to die (Eccles. 3:2)—but mentions no time of living—as if that were so short it was not worth naming! Time, when it has once gone, cannot be recalled. "My life passes more swiftly than a runner. It flees away, filled with tragedy. It disappears like a swift boat, like an eagle that swoops down on its prey." Job 9:25-26. This Scripture compares time to a flying eagle. Yet time differs from the eagle in this: the eagle flies forward and then back again—but time has wings only to fly forward --it never returns! "Time flies irrevocably." The serious thoughts of our short stay here would be a great means of promoting godliness. What if death should come before we are ready? What if our life should breathe out before God's Spirit has breathed in? Whoever considers how flitting and winged his life is—will hasten his repentance!

7. Make this maxim your own—that godliness is the purpose of your creation. God never sent men into the world only to eat and drink and put on fine clothes—but that they might "Serve him in holiness and righteousness" (Luke 1:74,75). God made the world only as a dressing room—to dress our souls in. He sent us here on the grand errand of godliness. Should nothing but the body (the brutish part) be looked after, this would be basely to degenerate, yes, to invert and frustrate the very purpose of our being!

8. Be often among the godly. They are the salt of the earth—and will help to season you. Their counsel may direct you; their prayers may enliven you. Such holy sparks may be thrown into your breasts as may kindle devotion in you. It is good to be among the saints, to learn the trade of godliness: "He who walks with wise men shall be wise" (Proverbs 13:20).

SEEK, AND YE SHALL FIND

Many years ago, and long before any awakening took place on the Isle of Skye, a young girl, of little more than childish years, residing in a glen which, during the revival, was distinguished by much of Divine power, became deeply impressed with the idea that God was not in her native isle. At the same time she was overcome by the feeling that she must go in pursuit of Him where He was to be found. She accordingly stole away from her parents, and traveled across the country to the usual outlet by the ferry to the mainland. As she proceeded, she made no secret of the errand on which she had departed, and, as her relations had taken up the opinion that she had become unsound in her mind, little attempt was made to recall her.

As soon as she was out of Skye she began to ask every passenger with whom she met where she might find God, for that He was not in her country. She called at houses, too, by the way, asking direction in her uncommon inquiry. Pity and kind treatment marked the conduct of all towards her. Her question excited surprise, but as her manner expressed sincerity and deep earnestness, everyone answered soothingly, and as unwilling to interfere with the hallucination under which they conceived she laboured. In this way she journeyed for days and weeks; but, though disappointed in every application for the knowledge which she sought, she did not desist.

At length she reached the town of Inverness, often heard of, and which her youthful imagination had long pictured the centre of all that was good and valuable, as well as great. The first person whom she there met, and to whom she made application, was a pious lady, addressed by her on the street. She stopped her, and said in Gaelic: "I am come from Skye, where God is not — can you tell me where I shall find Him?" The lady was struck not more with the unusual nature of the address than the deep-toned earnestness and solemnity of her manner. Her first impression was that of others to whom the poor child had spoken by the way; but she engaged in conversation with her, and became satisfied of her sanity. "Come with me," at last she said, "perhaps I can bring you to where you shall find God." She took her to her home.

Next day was the Sabbath. The wanderer accompanied her kind protector to the House of God. For the first time the Gospel was declared in her hearing — it came "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" to her soul. She was an awakened sinner, and soon became a happy convert; lived for many years in the lady's family; never again returned to Skye; married and settled in the parish of Croy, near Inverness, and was one of the most eminent Christians of her day. She lived long, and was greatly distinguished for her devotedness and fervency as a follower of the Lamb.

Who Shall Separate Us?

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. 8:35-37)

IN this passage there are three very remarkable questions:

1. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Paul stands forth like a herald, and he looks up to the holy angels, and down to the accusing devils, and round about on a scowling world, and into conscience, and he asks, Who can accuse one whom God has chosen, and Christ has washed? It is God who justifieth. The holy God has declared believers clean every whit.

2. "Who shall condemn? "Paul looks round all the judges of the world—all who are skilled in law and equity; he looks upward to the holy angels, whose superhuman sight pierces deep and far into the righteous government of God; he looks up to God, the judge of all, who must do right—whose ways are equal and perfect righteousness—and he asks, Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died. Christ has paid the uttermost farthing: so that every judge must cry, out, There is now no condemnation.

3. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? "Again, he looks round all created world—he looks at the might of the mightiest archangel—the satanic power of legions of devils—the rage of a God-defying world—the united forces of all created things; and, when he sees sinners folded in the arms of Jesus, he cries, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Not all the forces of ten thousand worlds combined, for Jesus is greater than all. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

The love of Christ! Paul says: "The love of Christ passeth knowledge." It is like the blue sky, into which you may see clearly, but the real vastness of which you cannot measure. It is like the deep, deep sea, into whose bosom you can look a little way, but its depths are unfathomable. It has a breadth without a bound, length without end, height without top, and depth without bottom. If holy Paul said this, who was so deeply taught in divine things—who had been in the third heaven, and seen the glorified face of Jesus—how much more may we, poor and weak believers, look into that love and say: It passeth knowledge!

There are three things in these words, of which I would speak. 1. The love of Christ. 2. The question, Who would separate us from it? 3. The truth, that whoever or whatever they are, they shall not be able.

I. I would speak of the love of Christ.

1. When did it begin?—In the past eternity: "Then I was by him as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth; and my delights were with the son so finen." (Prov. 8:30,31.) This river of love began to flow before the world was—from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Christ's love to us is as old as the Father's love to the Son. This river of light began to stream from Jesus toward us before the beams poured from the sun—before the rivers flowed to the ocean—before angel loved angel, or man loved man. Before creatures were, Christ loved us. This is a great deep—who can fathom it? This love passeth knowledge.

2. Who was it that loved? It was Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the blessed Godhead. His name is, "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," "King of kings and Lord of lords," Immanuel, Jesus the Saviour, the only begotten of his Father. His beauty is perfect: he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. All the purity, majesty, and love of Jehovah dwell fully in him. He is the bright and morning Star: he is the Sun of righteousness and the Light of the world: he is the Rose of Sharon and the Lilly of the valleys—fairer than the children of men. His riches are infinite: he could say, "All that the Father hath is mine." He is Lord of all. All the crowns in heaven were cast at his feet—all angels and seraphs were his servants—all worlds his domain. His doings were infinitely glorious. By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible. He called the things that are not as though they were—worlds started into being at his word. Yet he loved us. It is much to be loved by one greater in rank than ourselves—to be loved by an angel; but, O, to be loved by the Son of God!—this is wonderful—it passeth knowledge.

3. Whom did he love? He loved us! He came into the world "to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." Had he loved one as glorious as himself, we would not have wondered. Had he loved the holy angels, that reflected his pure, bright image, we would not have wondered. Had he loved the lovely among the sons of men—the amiable, the gentle, the kind, the rich, the great, the noble—it would not have been so great a wonder. But, ah ! he loved sinners—the vilest sinners—the poorest, meanest, guiltiest wretches that crawl upon the ground. Manasseh, who murdered his own children, was one whom he loved; Zaccheus, the grey-haired swindler, was another; blaspheming Paul was a third; the wanton of Samaria was another; the dying thief was another; and the lascivious Corinthians were more. "And such were

some of you." We were black as hell when he looked on us—we were hell-worthy, under his Father's wrath and curse—and yet he loved us, and said: I will die for them. "Thou hast loved me out of the pit of corruption," each saved one can say. Oh, brethren ! this is strange love: he that was so great, and lovely, and pure, chose us, who were mean and filthy with sin, that he might wash and purify, and present us to himself. This love passeth knowledge!

4. What did this love cost him? "When Jacob loved Rachel, he served seven years for her—he bore the summer's heat and winter's cold. But Jesus bore the hot wrath of God, and the winter blast of his Father's anger, for those he loved. Jonathan loved David with more than the love of women, and for his sake he bore the cruel anger of his father, Saul. But Jesus, out of love to us, bore the wrath of his Father poured out without mixture. It was the love of Christ that made him leave the love of his Father, the adoration of angels, and the throne of glory. It was love that made him not despise the Virgin's womb—it was love that brought him to the manger at Bethlehem—it was love that drove him into the wilderness; love made him a man of sorrows—love made him hungry, and thirsty, and weary—love made him hasten to Jerusalem—love led him to gloomy, dark Gethsemane—love bound and dragged him to the judgment hall—love nailed him to the cross—love bowed his head beneath the amazing load of his Father's anger. "Greater love hath no man than this." "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

Sinners were sinking beneath the red-hot flames of hell; he plunged in and swam through the awful surge, and gathered his own into his bosom. The sword of justice was bare and glittering, ready to destroy us; He, the man that was God's fellow, opened his bosom and let the stroke fall on him. We were set up as a mark for God's arrows of vengeance; Jesus came between, and they pierced him through and through—every arrow that should have pierced our souls stuck fast in him. He, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree. As far as east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. This is the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. This is what is set before you to-day in the broken bread and poured-out wine. This is what we shall see on the throne—a Lamb as it had been slain. This will be the matter of our song through eternity: "Worthy is the Lamb!"

1. O the joy of being in the love of Christ! Are you in this amazing love? Has he loved you out of the pit of corruption? Then, he will wash you, and make you a king and a priest unto God. He will wash you in his own blood whiter than the snow—he will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. A new heart also will he give you. He will keep your conscience clean, and your heart right with God. He will put his Holy Spirit within you, and make you pray with groanings that cannot be uttered. He will justify you—he will pray for you—he will glorify you. All the world may oppose you—dear friends may die and forsake you—you may be left alone in the wilderness; still you will not be alone—Christ will love you still.

2. O the misery of being out of the love of Christ! If Christ loves you not, how vain all other loves! Your friends may love you— your neighbours may be kind to you—the world may praise you—ministers may love your souls; but, if Christ love you not, all creature-love will be vain. You will be unwashed, unpardoned, unholy—you will sink into hell, and all the creatures will stand around and be unable to reach out a hand to help you.

3. How shall I know I am in the love of Christ? By your being drawn to Christ: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Have you seen something attractive in Jesus? The world are attracted by beauty, or dress, or glittering jewels—have you been attracted to Christ by his good ointments? This is the mark of all who are graven on Christ's heart—they come to him; they see Jesus to be precious. The easy world see no preciousness in Christ; they prize a lust higher, the smile of the world higher, money higher, pleasure higher; but those whom Christ loves he draws after him by the sight of his preciousness. Have you thus followed him, prized him—as a drowning sinner cleaved to him?—then he will in no wise cast you out—in no wise, not for all you have done against him. "But I spent my best days in sin"—Still I will in no wise cast you out. "I lived in open sin"—I will in no wise cast you out. " But I have sinned against light and conviction"—Still I will in no wise cast you out. "But I am a backslider"—Still the arms of his love are open to enfold your poor guilty soul, and he will not cast you out.

II. Many would separate us from Christ's love. From the beginning of the world it has been the great aim of Satan to separate believers from the love of Christ; and though he never has succeeded in the case of a single soul, yet still he tries it as eagerly as he did at first. The moment he sees the Saviour lift a lost sheep upon his shoulder, from that hour he plies all his efforts to pluck down the poor saved sheep from its place of rest. The moment the pierced hand of Jesus is laid on a poor, trembling, guilty sinner, from that hour does Satan try to pluck him out of Jesus' hand.

1. He did this in old times: "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (Verse 36.) This is a cry taken from the Book of Psalms. God's people in all ages have been hated and persecuted by Satan and the world. Observe, (1) The reason: "For thy sake"—because they were like Jesus, and belonged to Jesus. (2) The time: "All day long"—from morning till night. The world have a perpetual hatred against true believers, so that we have to say at evening: "Would God it were morning; and at morning, Would God it were evening." They have no other perpetual hatred. (3) The manner: "We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." The world care no more for ill-treating a Christian than the butcher does when he lays hold of a sheep for the slaughter. The very drunkards

make a song of us. Such was the cry of believers of old. The same cry has been heard amid the snowy heights of Piedmont; and, in later days, amid the green hills and valleys of Scotland. And we are miserably deceived if we flatter ourselves that the same cry will not be heard again. Is the devil changed? Does he love Christ and his dear people any better? Is the worldly heart changed? Does it hate God and God's people any less than it did? Ah! no. I have a deep conviction that, if God only withdraw his restraining grace, the flood-gates of persecution will soon break loose again; and many of you, left unconverted under our ministry, will turn out bloody persecutors—you will yet avenge yourselves for the sermons that have pricked your hearts.

2. The apostle names seven forms in which trouble comes. Two of them relate to the troubles that are common to man, and five to those that are more peculiar to the children of God.

(1) Tribulation and distress: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." God's children are not freed from distresses—sickness, poverty, loss of friends. Jesus said to them: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Whom I love I rebuke and chasten." Now, Satan tries to take advantage of these times of tribulation, to separate the soul from the love of Christ; he tempts the believer to despise the chastening of the Lord—to plunge into business, or among worldly friends, or to follow worldly means of soothing sorrow. Again: he tries to make the soul faint under them—repine and murmur, and charge God foolishly—not to believe his love and wisdom in the furnace. In these ways Satan tries to separate from the love of Christ. A time of tribulation is a time of danger.

(2) Persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—all these are weapons which Satan makes use of against God's children. The history of the Church in all ages has been a history of persecution. No sooner does a soul begin to show concern for religion—no sooner does that soul cleave to Jesus, than the world talk, to the grief of those whom God hath wounded. What bitter words are hurled against that soul! In all ages this has been true: "They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy." Those that eat the bread of God have often been driven from their quiet meal—those who are clothed with Christ have often had to part with worldly clothing, and have been exposed to famine, nakedness, peril, and sword—the last extremity. Cain murdered Abel. They killed the Prince of Life; and so all his creatures ever since have been exposed to the same. Do not say, The times are changed, and these are the days of toleration. Christ is not changed—Satan is not changed, and, when it suites his turn, he will use the same weapons.

III. All these cannot separate us.

"In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

How are we more than conquerors?

1. We conquer even before the battle is done. In all other battles we do not know how the victory is to turn until the battle is won. In the battle of Waterloo, it was long thought that the French had gained; and Napoleon sent several despatches to Paris, telling that he had won. But in the fight with the world, Satan, and the flesh, we know how the victory is to turn already. Christ has engaged to carry us through. He will guard us against the darts of the law, by hiding us in his blood. He defends us from the power of sin by his Holy Spirit, put within us. He will keep us in the secret of his presence, from the strife of tongues. The thicker the battle, the closer will he keep to us; so that we can sing already: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." We know that we shall overcome. Though the world were a million times more enraged—though the fires of persecution were again to be kindled—though my heart were a million times more wicked—though all the temptations of hell were let loose upon me—I know I shall overcome through him that loved me. When Paul and Silas sang in the low dungeon, they were more than conquerors. When Paul sang, in spite of his thorn, "I will glory in my infirmities," he was more than a conqueror.

2. We gain by our conflict. Often a victory is a loss. So it was in that battle in Israel, after the dark night in Gibeah. All Israel mourned, for a tribe was nearly cut off out of Israel; and so, in most victories, the song of triumph is mingled with the sobbings of the widow and orphan. Not so in the good fight of faith. We are more than conquerors. We gain by our enemies. (1) We cling closer to Christ. Every wave of trouble for Christ's sake lifts the soul higher upon the Rock. Every arrow of bitterness shot after the believer makes him hide farther back in the clefts of Jesus. Be content, dear friend, to bear these troubles, which make you cling closer to your Beloved. (2) They shake us loose from sin. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. If the world smiled and fawned upon you, you would lie on its lap. But when it frowns, then Jesus is our all. (3) Great is your reward in heaven. We gain a brighter crown. Be not afraid; nothing shall ever separate you from the love of Christ. O that I could know that you were all in Christ's love—that the arms of Jesus were enfolding you—then I would know that all the hatred of men, and all the policy of hell, would never prevail against you! "If God be for you, who can be against you? "If God has chosen you—called you—washed you—justified you—then he will glorify you. O yield to his loving hands, you that are not far from the kingdom of God! Let him wash you, for then he will carry you to glory.

THE EPILOGUE

“Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me (David) an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire . . .” (2 Samuel 23:5)

These are some of the “last words” of King David. In verse 1, we have David’s introduction, in which he refers to himself as “the son of Jesse”, the one who, in youth, gained a remarkable victory over Goliath (17:12,49) and then a description of him as he was later in life, “the anointed of the God of Israel, and the sweet psalmist of Israel” (23:1).

First of all, David was “anointed of the God of Israel” (16:19) which shows that he was “set apart” to the office of king and also equipped to exercise that office. The Lord Jesus Christ came of the seed of David (Lk 3:31); and, indeed, David was a remarkable “type” (a prophetic foreshadowing) of Christ. It is for this reason that prophecy refers to Christ as another David (Ezek 34:23,24; Hos 3:5). As the great “Antitype”, Christ proved to be “great David’s greater Son.”

Secondly, reference is made to David as the “sweet psalmist of Israel”. This is another aspect of David's legacy, supplying the Church of God with the essential means of glorifying God in Christ. What a precious legacy! What better and more biblical way of singing God's praises is there, than to use the material which God himself has inspired – the Psalter! “Is any merry? let him sing psalms.” (James 5:13).!

Thirdly, we read of the “everlasting covenant.” is covenant was *made* in eternity, the Father and the Son being the contracting Parties (Ps 89:3; Gal 3:17), but as soon as the covenant of works was broken, God *revealed* it to our guilty first parents. One far stronger and better that Adam would eventually come and fulfill the necessary conditions, obeying where Adam disobeyed and suffering and dying under sin’s dreadful penalty (Genesis 3:6,15; Gal 4:4). As “the seed”, exclusively of the woman, “he was bruised for our iniquities” (Is 53:5). is covenant, *as to its promises and their fulfillment*, is made *with us*, as with David, at the time of our effectual calling (Is 55:3), enabling us to say, “this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”.

Owen French