

The Love of God to Man

by Benjamin Franklin

The sermon emphasizes the love of God to man, as demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and calls listeners to turn to God and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Scripture: Psalm 37:10, Psalm 86:15, Micah 7:18, Matthew 9:37, Acts 26:28, Romans 5:20, Romans 15:13, Romans 15:33, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Suffering And Trials", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

The preacher delves into the multifaceted nuances of the Greek word 'oligos,' which can refer to being small in number, time, distance, size, or degree. The term is used in various contexts throughout the Bible, highlighting the significance of 'little' in God's economy. Believers are encouraged to endure suffering with the understanding that it is temporary and light compared to the eternal weight of glory awaiting them. Ultimately, the sermon emphasizes that God, the God of all grace, is sovereign over every trial and suffering, promising restoration and eternal reward for those who persevere.

Transcript

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3: 16.

HE words just read set forth the most wonderful statement ever uttered, and yet one of the most encouraging to the human race. When we consider that the history of mankind for four thousand years had been but little else than the history of sin and transgression; and that, at the time Jesus came into the world, the race had all gone out of the way--that there were none good--that the whole world had become guilty before God, was conducted in unbelief--all lost; when the corruptions, crimes, and iniquities that constantly were in remembrance before God from all parts of the world, is it not wonderful beyond expression "that God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him might not perish, but have everlasting life?" What a wonderful lesson there is contained in this, and with what child-like simplicity the apostle deduces that lesson from it: "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4: 11).

What an unspeakable satisfaction it is to every human being to know that, however neglected by men, cast off and forsaken; however down-trodden, oppressed, and despised of men, each one is loved by the Creator and Benefactor of all! When a poor creature is seen degraded, corrupted and cast down, how blessed it is to know that God has loved such an one. However degraded, debased, and despised, every

creature of the human race is a subject of the love of God. God loved the world; nay more, he "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him might not perish, but have everlasting life!" [146]

In noticing speakers, in their efforts to give expression to their ideas of the lofty origin of the grand scheme of divine benevolence vouchsafed to men, you will hear one assert that it originated in the Infinite Power. That is truly a lofty origin for the Gospel scheme, but it rises not high enough. Another effort is made, and the speaker says it originated in the Infinite Wisdom. That is certainly ascending one step higher in the scale, but is by no means satisfactory. He makes another struggle, and rises another step. He says the glorious plan originated in the Infinite Will: the Lord willed it, and it was done. But he makes one more effort, and declares that the grand scheme of human redemption originated in the Infinite Goodness; that the Infinite Goodness originated and suggested it, the Infinite Will resolved it, the Infinite Wisdom devised it, and the Infinite Power executed it.

What an overwhelming thought, that the infinitely pure, holy, and just One, in looking over the debased, degraded, and corrupted children of men--fallen, lost, and in ruins, should have had compassion--that the Infinite breast should have been moved with pity for man! What amazing pity, what wonderful compassion, what boundless mercy! He loved the world, was moved with compassion, and resolved: "I will have mercy on a lost race. I will extend my hand in pity, in infinite compassion, in divine mercy, to save, to lift up, purify, ennoble, happify, and glorify humanity." But when the divine resolve was made to make an offering for sin, where was an offering to be found rich enough to be an exponent of the infinite compassion for man--an offering to expiate the sins of the world? The cattle on a thousand hills would be by far too feeble, too poor, and mean an offering. Such an offering could not take away sin. The gold of the four quarters of the globe could not take away sin. All the landed patrimony of earth, concentrated into one sin-offering, could not expiate one sin, free one soul from death--could not save one lost sinner. Where was a sin-offering to be found rich enough, a victim sufficiently precious [147] to be, at the same time, an expression of the love, the infinite compassion, and that could expiate sin--be the one sin-offering, and purge us forever from our sins?

When men make a sacrifice, they frequently seek something that they can give, as they express it, and "never feel it." But those sacrifices that men make without feeling it, are miserably poor and mean sacrifices. They ought to be ashamed of them. Even a Jew selected the best, the most perfect, and the richest gifts for offerings. When the Lord was about to make a sin-offering, where did he find the gift? He looked through his vast dominions, and selected the dearest object, the richest jewel--that which lay nearest to his own bosom--his own dear Son--the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and gave him--yes, blessed be his name, gave him up freely for us all, that whoever believes on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. How beautifully Paul alludes to this, in his plea for a rich gift for the poor saints: "Know you not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet, for our sakes, he became poor; that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." Well, too, does the poet break forth in the following strain:

"Let everlasting thanks be thine

For such a bright display,

As makes the world of darkness shine

With beams of heavenly day.

Oh, for this love, let rocks and hills

Their lasting silence break,

And all harmonious human tongues

Their Saviour's praises speak."

But seeing that our Lord became poor that we might be rich, it might be profitable to inquire how poor he became. To this there is a ready answer. He became so poor that, on one occasion, he exclaimed: "The foxes have dens, and the birds have places of repose, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head." Is there anywhere a murmuring, pining, and complaining disciple of Jesus, lamenting his hard fate, his poverty, his lowly condition? Is there anywhere a poor, weak, and complaining preacher, lamenting over his hard fate, [148] his poor fare, his scanty support? If there is, let him look up and inquire, Is the servant better than Master? Is the disciple better than his Lord? If the Lord had not where to lay his head, and did not murmur nor complain, why should his followers, for whom, in the general, there is much better provision made, murmur or complain? There are but few preachers now, poorly as they are cared for, and many of them meagrely supported, as well as lacking that hearty encouragement which they should receive, who can honestly say they have not where to lay their heads. Many of them are poorly provided with the good things of this world, and some lack the comforts of this life really due them, and very many brethren will find themselves unable to render a just account in the final judgment, on account of withholding from them their just due. These should be taught to lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. But this does not by any means justify any man in murmuring, as a follower of Jesus, or a preacher of the Gospel, because he is poor or has a hard lot. The poor men of the kingdom have done, and are doing, to a great extent, as private members and preachers, the main body of the hard work--doing it for a small compensation, and living hard. In doing this, without complaining, they are following their Lord and Master.

What a wonderful thought, that he, who was rich with the Father in heaven, should have become poor, that we, through his poverty, should be made rich! This our Lord did--become so poor that he had not where to lay his head, and that, too, when those whom he came to bless had plenty, and not only would not bestow any thing for his support, but despised and rejected him. What a scene, too, it was for him to look upon, to see his own people, whom he came to save, in the open way to ruin, as they turned away from him, and dashed the cup of salvation from their lips! What a scene for the contemplation of the children of men, to see him, as he stands, looking [149] over the devoted city, and cries, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that stonest the prophets, and killest those that are sent to thee; how often would I have gathered your children as a hen gathers her brood, but you would not!" In infinite love he came to save them; to lift them up, and crown them with glory and honor, but they would not have him to reign over them.

The present occasion should not be disturbed by any dry and tough theories, but a bare allusion must be made to one, without attempting to tell how far wrong or how near right it is. The theory in view starts out by contemplating the Father as filled with rage and fury, with an uplifted hand, ready to smite the earth with a curse. But just as the fatal blow, which was due to man, was about to fall, the most gracious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ stepped in, and the blow that was due to us fell on him. As just stated, it is not the purpose now to try to determine how far this is wrong, nor how near it is right; but one thing is obvious, and that is, that while it presents the Saviour as a most benevolent, lovely, and compassionate being,

there is nothing in it to lead us to love the Father. The Scripture says, "We love God, because he first loved us." We love the Father, because he gave the Son; and love the Son, because he loved us, and gave himself for us. This leads us to love both the Father and the Son.

Some men have much to say of the love of God and of salvation, who sweep away all ground of the love of God and all idea of salvation. The love of God was in view of man perishing. He "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Man was in sin, in danger of perishing, of losing eternal life. It was that he might not perish but have eternal life. The man, therefore, that does not believe that man can perish, that there is any danger of man perishing, or that there is any such thing as man perishing or losing eternal life, has no foundation for the love of God. If man was never lost, in any danger of perishing, of losing eternal life, of losing both soul and body in hell, why [150] should God have loved the world, and what did Jesus accomplish by coming into the world? In that view, what salvation is there? Salvation is deliverance. Where there is no deliverance there is no salvation. If man was never lost, never in any danger of perishing, nor of losing his soul--if there is no hell, second death, nor eternal punishment--if the soul can not be lost in hell; in one word, if there is no danger of any sort, all idea of salvation is wiped out. The vamping of some men about the salvation of all mankind, is the most idle fiction ever dreamed of. Salvation from what? From sin in this world? Certainly not, for they deny that any are saved from sin in this world. From hell after death? Surely not, according to their theory; for there is no hell beyond this life. From the second death? By no means; for with them there is no second death. Where, then, is their salvation or their deliverance? They literally have no salvation from any thing in this world or the world to come--no deliverance from any thing in time or eternity. But the scriptural idea of it is, that man was lost under sin, included in unbelief, and God loved him--so loved him that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him might not perish, but have eternal life. Jesus came in divine compassion to save that which was lost--came into the world, that the world through him might be saved.

This is the great trouble in preaching in the present day, to induce men to realise that they are sinners; that they are lost, in unbelief, under condemnation, and will finally be lost, soul and body in hell, unless they are united with Christ. If men could be brought to realise their danger of being lost, as they generally do in the immediate expectation of death, what an effort there would be to come to the Saviour. The reason preaching does not take more effect is not that men can not understand the Gospel, but they are not sensible of their danger. They are not impressed with the idea that they are guilty before God, condemned and must be pardoned or be lost forever. The reason, too, why there is not more zeal in the preachers and private members [151] of the church than there is, may be found in the fact that they are not sufficiently impressed with the awful truth that the world is lost, under condemnation, and must perish forever, unless turned to God. This is really the case whether we realise it or not, and the great matter is for the preacher to keep his soul impressed continually with the awful idea that it is so. In doing this he is certain to impress those who hear him with the same overwhelming idea. The man made conscious of the idea that he is lost, guilty, and condemned; that he must finally perish unless he turns to God, will desire salvation and seek the way. Such an one will find the way.

The very circumstance that God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him might not perish, but have eternal life, and that our Lord became poor that we, through his poverty, might be rich, should rouse every human being, stir every power within, and cause one general rush to the extended hands of compassion, the offers of mercy, and a most gracious pardon. How can any one be content for a single day; how can any one rest for a moment; how can any one ever slumber till he

is reconciled to God, justified or pardoned, after learning that the deplorable condition, the inevitable ruin to which he was rushing, and the awful punishment to which he was exposed, so to speak, moved the great, the infinite and eternal One in compassion, love, and mercy; yes, not only moved, roused, and called forth the infinite compassion, but so wonderfully moved the divine compassion as to call the Lord from heaven to earth to recover man from ruin?

"We love God, because he first loved us." God was manifested in the flesh, so that he who saw Jesus saw the Father in him. As man loves and honors the Son, so he loves and honors the Father. The object now is to turn attention to the Son of God, and inquire into the reasons why we should love him. In his life are these reasons found why we should love him. Let the mind, then, follow him, examine what he said and [152] did in search of reasons for loving him. How did he act toward objects of pity, of compassion and mercy? Follow him, if you please, and notice. Imagine that you see him, followed by a vast multitude, passing along, and, as he passes, you notice a poor blind man sitting by the way. The blind man inquires for the cause of this vast concourse of people, when some one explains to him that "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." You notice the pitiable object to see what he will do. He lifts his sightless eye-balls, and most imploringly calls out, "Son of Nazareth, Son of David, have pity on me." The Lord stops, gives attention to this poor blind man. He who was with the Father before the beginning of time, by whom and for whom were all things, inquires of the pitiable object of mercy, "What will you have?" In the simplicity of a child, and in view of his great calamity, he exclaims, "O that I might receive my sight." In the same moment, and by the same act, the Lord put forth his almighty power, and gave both a demonstration of his benevolence and divinity in giving this poor man sight. For the first time the man looked up and saw the beautiful heavens above him, all nature around him, and, it may be, his own father and mother, sisters and brothers. Had you been there, would you not have been disposed to fall down before him and exclaim, as one did on another occasion, "Lord Jesus have mercy on me, for I am a poor sinful man." He showed that he was the friend of the objects of pity and compassion, and, at the same time, that he possessed infinite power. There is reason to love him, then, both in view of his condescension to the lowly and his demonstration of almighty power.

Please turn attention to another point and view him on another occasion. He was out at sea, on one of those frail vessels anciently used mainly in coasting, in company with some of his disciples, and they were overtaken in a frightful storm. He was composedly lying on his pillow asleep. When the disciples saw the danger they were greatly frightened, and in much consternation came to him, exclaiming, "Master, [153] behold we perish." Our gracious Lord rose up quietly, deliberately, and without the least trepidation, calmly he walked forward, looked out into the dark and furious heavens and over the foaming sea; gently he lifted his hand, and in mildness said, "Peace, be still." In a few moments all is calm, serene, and secure. Some one, amazed, exclaimed, "Who is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Well may he be called "Emanuel," or, when translated, "God with us." Here he demonstrated both his power and willingness to save. How could the disciples, then, with him have failed to love and adore him as their Saviour, after such a grand transaction? How can any man now fail to love, adore, and honor him as the chief among all the ten thousands, and altogether lovely?

Please accompany him on another occasion--one more touching and sympathetic. You remember the account of that remnant of a family consisting of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. The probability is that the father, mother, and, it may be, other brothers and sisters had died, and these were alone. In affection and devotion to each other they cling together. It is now a precious little circle--an only brother and two sisters dwelling quietly and in love together. But suddenly the king of terror forces his way into the little circle and

strikes down the last male member of the family. Lazarus is dead! All is solemnity. The heart-broken sisters are in unutterable grief. Their brother is gone! He had now been dead four days. Jesus is passing that way. As he draws near, one of the weeping and heart-broken sisters hastens to meet him, overwhelmed with grief, and exclaims, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." See John 11: 21, 22. Jesus replied, "Your brother shall rise again." Martha replied, "I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day." This, however, was not precisely the comfort she desired. She desired that her brother be restored now. "Jesus said to [154] her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes on me, shall never die. Do you believe this?" She replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world." She then hastened and called Mary, and when she was come she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." "When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the Spirit and was troubled," and inquired where they had laid him, and the historian says "Jesus wept." Blessed be his name; he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He entered into sympathy with humanity, and was moved by the sorrows and bereavements of the children of men.

"Come," says he, "and show me where you have laid him." They accompany him to the grave of Lazarus, and he commands them to take away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. Martha said, "By this time the body has become offensive." Jesus replied, "Did I not say to you, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?" He then lifted his eyes and addressed his Father, thanking him that he always heard him, and explaining that because of the people he made the address, that they might believe that the Father had sent him; and, having concluded his address to the Father, he turned and addressed himself to the dead man. Did you ever hear anyone address a dead person? Did you ever hear the bereaved and disconsolate widow address her dead husband as he lay in the coffin? No response is made! Did you ever hear the mother as she addressed her dead child? The child gave no answer. All was still and silent. What appalling gloom! But, thanks to God, when Jesus shall speak to the dead they will respond. "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." He who was dead came forth, bound hand and foot, with grave-clothes on, and his face bound with a napkin; and Jesus commanded them to loose him and [155] let him go. Thus he demonstrated his benevolence in restoring a brother to his afflicted sisters, and his divinity in raising a man from the dead; showed his love to all mankind, and his power to raise the dead. What an unbounded relief to the soul, to know that we have a friend, a Saviour, who is able and willing to make the dead alive. "As I live, you shall also live," says "he who was dead and is alive, and lives forever and ever."

Please accompany the Saviour at another point. Imagine you see him late in the evening, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane. They walk along quietly and silently. The disciples are guided by him, but know not where they are going nor what is to be done. He was accustomed to retire to the solitude for devotions. It is said of him, in one instance, that he prayed all night. He so frequently drew aside from the multitude for prayer, for composure, and an opportunity for imparting private instructions, that they had no need of any surprise at his drawing aside at this time nor in this manner. No new interest appears to have been excited in them by the movement. They passed along their quiet way, entered the garden, and after walking a short distance he turned to them and said, "You stay here and watch, while I go yonder and pray." His soul was heavy. He was exceeding sorrowful. Advancing a few paces he fell down on his face and prayed: "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Who can repeat this language with a due appreciation of what is contained in it? This was prayer in the true sense--prayer indeed. He had the cross in view, with all

the shame and mockery accompanying, with his wonderful sufferings. He had a sinful world on his soul. Rising up he returned and found the men whom he commanded to watch, asleep. How mortifying in this hour of trial, when his soul was bowed down in grief, that these men, whom he had specially called and who had accompanied him for about three and a half years, should have been [156] so little interested in and impressed by the great matters in hand, that they had, in a few moments when he stepped aside from them, fallen asleep. But they had misunderstood him all the time, had no realisation of all that was at hand, nor expectation of what was soon to occur. "What!" said he, "could you not watch with me one hour?"

After rebuking them, with all the wonderful matters soon to transpire in Jerusalem on his soul, he returned, and, falling down, prayed the same words again: "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Rising again he found them asleep the second time, and rebuked them. How hard that they should have fallen asleep while he was in the midst of these terrible agonies! Returning again he prayed the same words: "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." In his terrible agony his sweat became as great drops of blood. How great was his love! How wonderful the agony of mind, his trouble in spirit! In view of this scene, let no saint fear that his zeal, solicitude, and anxiety are too great, that his prayers are too fervent, that he has too vivid and lively an appreciation of the great cause in which he is engaged in striving to save man. What everlasting obligations we are under to love, adore, and honor the Saviour of men!

Returning to the disciples, he found them sleeping the third time, and told them to sleep on now, and take their rest. No wonder that poor, weak, and care-worn men and women should fall asleep now, under the best efforts men can make in preaching the Gospel, if they could not have kept awake on that night. But their rest was not permitted to last long. Soon he says, "Let us be going." He knows what they are to meet. Often had he crossed the Cedron to this garden, and Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place; and having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came, with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus knew all these things; went out, met [157] them, and inquired, "Whom do you seek?" They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." He answered them, "I am he."

How bold and independent! No evasion, no apology, nor expression of surprise. Judas, who betrayed him, was there with them. When the Lord answered "I am he," they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then he inquired again of them, "Whom do you seek?" They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." Again he said, "I am he." Peter, who was standing by, with all his ideas of an earthly kingdom in his mind, resolute, and determined to fight for his Master, instantly drew his sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. The Lord then turned to Peter, and commanded him to put up his sword, adding, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" "Then the band, the captain, and officers of the Jews, took Jesus, bound him," and led him away. Peter and John followed him, witnessing all that was done; but, seeing their Master under arrest, and in the hands of his enemies, their courage failed them.

The high priest asked Jesus concerning his disciples and his teaching. The Lord replied, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask me? Ask them who heard me what I have said to them; behold, they know what I said." An officer who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, adding, "Do you thus answer the high priest?" What an indignity! How mildly and meekly it was endured! He calmly replied, "If I have spoken evil, bear testimony of the evil; but if well, why do you strike me?" During the trial, and when he needed a friend more than he had ever done before, Peter had been given over to Satan to be sifted, and denied him three times. What a scene was here for men and angels to witness! The only absolutely

pure, perfect, and sinless inhabitant this world has ever had, was arrested, and brought before the civil court, and tried for his life. After a calm and impartial [158] examination of the case, their judge said, "I find in him no fault at all," or, as they express it in the civil courts now, "I find him not guilty." What a picture! He, who knew all things, had power to call twelve legions of angels to his relief, stood in the court; permitted himself to be treated as a criminal; made no effort to escape condemnation; made not a single explanation, nor correction of mistake or misunderstanding, but permitted them to proceed in their own way, and come to their own conclusion. He appeared to express no concern in the matter of their decision, but gave them an opportunity to act entirely free, thus giving the world a complete demonstration what the wickedness of humanity would do when left entirely to itself or free. What did it do? It cried, "Let him be crucified." When the Roman judge had such scruples as to wash his hands before the court, as their custom was, and say "I have cleansed my hands of the blood of this innocent person," the rage of the Jews, their prejudice, and determination in the matter, were such, that they cried, "Let his blood be on us and our children." The Lord pity humanity when left to itself. How man should fear and dread the idea of the Lord leaving him to himself, to rush down to ruin! to condemn the innocent, and let the guilty go clear. The immaculate Saviour is condemned to die, and the robber, Barrabas, is released.

What can not sin do? It can pervert civil courts--courts of justice turn away their wise and good purpose, and make them a means to condemn the innocent and release the guilty. It can work into the highest courts, and secure the most cruel and wicked decisions, the most unjust and unreasonable. Sin can work its way up to the most august legislative bodies; gain the ascendancy over justice and equity; secure the enactment of the most unjust, partial, and cruel laws. It can control magistrates, executives, and prevent the enforcement of the purest and best laws ever enacted by man. It can push schemes of gain and oppression through the world. It can produce commotion, confusion, and strife, deluging the land in blood, filling it [159] with widows and orphans, death and mourning! Still, men and women press it to their hearts!

Pilate went forth and said, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that you may know that I find no fault in him." They deliberately placed a crown of thorns on his head, and robed him in purple; and as Jesus came forth, crowned with thorns, and robed in purple, Pilate exclaimed, "Behold the man!" "Ecce Homo!" When the chief priests and officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." Pilate said, "Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him." They responded, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." These were religious men that thus persisted in the clamor to crucify; and not only religious men, but religious rulers and teachers. They were the men who were looked up to as examples in teaching and practice! The Lord pity the people, and have mercy on them when such men as these rule. Thick darkness was over their minds; their hearts were hardened; their minds were perverted; the way of righteousness they knew not. Little they knew of the wrath they were treasuring up against the day of wrath. Little did they know of the desolation that was hanging over their people, city, and temple. Little did they think that the God of Abraham would cast them off for their unbelief and hardness of heart. Yet these awful realities were before them.

They took him and led him away, "bearing his cross." Imagine that you see him, as he leaves the court, bearing his cross along the streets, crowned with thorns, and robed in purple, meekly and uncomplainingly. Rough and uncultivated men are thronging the way near by him, offering insult at every corner. Thousands of idle and thoughtless boys and girls throng the streets. Women are seen on the streets, sidewalks, in the doors and windows, uniting in the general popular current, clamoring, "Crucify him! crucify him!" A little to one side, are seen the priests, the rabbis, the doctors, lawyers, and scribes, in low [160] tones, uttering words of wrath and bitterness. What a scene was this for men and angels to view!

Is it not wonderful that the Lord did not smite the earth with a curse?

As the tradition goes, owing to his fasting, his wonderful agonies in the garden, and the suffering of his soul, in view of all the indignities he endured, his bodily strength gave way, and he sank beneath the weight of the cross; and they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, from the country, to bear his cross. The latter part of this is clearly stated, Luke 23: 26. They ascend the mount, and reach the appointed place. They extend his arms, and drive nails through his hands into the wood of the cross, lift it rudely from the ground, and plant it so that it will stand. There he hangs, on the rough iron spikes, through the thick part of his hands, all his muscles in a quiver, writhing in the most excruciating sufferings! The blood is seen tracing down over his temples as he hangs struggling for breath. Wicked, hard-hearted, and cruel men mock him. Even the thieves crucified, one on each side of him, revile him. One calls out, "If you are the Christ, come down from the cross." Three long hours he hung there, a spectacle to men and angels, in the midst of blasphemies, scoffs, and mockings! When the fever of death was on his lips, he called for a sip of water. What a small favor! only a sip of water, to cool the feverish, parched lips of the dying Saviour! Did you ever, as you sat by the bed of the dying friend, hear the soft and gentle request for a sip of water? Do you remember with what inexpressible delight you gave the water? The dying Lord was not even afforded that relief! A man fastened a sponge on a reed, dipped it in vinegar, mingled with myrrh, and held it up to the lips of the suffering Redeemer. He turned away, refusing to drink it.

He suffers on a few minutes longer; and, looking back in the crowd, he saw a circle of women, a little more refined and elevated than the cruel masses. At all events, they had hearts that could be moved. They [161] had common feelings of humanity. They, at least, to some extent, were sensible of his sufferings, and were weeping. Jesus lifted his eyes, and called out to them: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." He saw not only the present, but the future, both of these women and their children. He saw that awful calamity which hung over their nation, city, and temple, and had predicted their overthrow. The words he uttered were not merely for those women, but for the millions to come, showing that he fully comprehended all that was to come.

Again, he looked over the multitude, and saw the woman that gave him birth, the blessed Mary, the mother of Jesus. He called to her, "Woman, behold your Son!" What a scene was there for a mother to look on! Her Son, whom she had a thousand times, in his childhood, pressed to her heart, and whom she still loved as her Son, though he was her Lord and Redeemer, in the hands of most cruel and heartless enemies, hanging on an ignominious Roman cross; robed in purple and crowned with thorns, and his face all covered with blood, struggling for breath! Mothers, in the kingdom of Jesus, think of looking on your lonely sons in such sufferings and ignominy, in the midst of cruel enemies! Death is hard in its mildest form, but how hard and terrible in the midst of heartless and bitter enemies! Turning his eye to the beloved disciple, John the apostle, he exclaims, "Son, behold your mother!" This appears to have been the only temporal arrangement he had to make. Every good man loves his mother. Jesus loved his mother, and made provision for her temporal wants when he was dying. He gave her the richest legacy he had, of an earthly nature, in giving John the beloved, one of the kindest and best of men, to be her son. He, at the same time, gave John a precious gift, in giving Mary, the mother of Jesus, to be his mother. John understood it, and took her to his own house, and cared for her till the day of her death. What an example this is to all men in reference to their mothers! [162]

In the midst of all this, how does he act in reference to his enemies? Here is an example. Come, O you professed followers of Jesus, and view this example, and then determine whether you know him, who was the chief among all the ten thousands, and altogether lovely. How did he feel toward his enemies and

persecutors, in the midst of his most excruciating pains, being aggravated every moment by their perversity and malignity? Hear his words: "O, my Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." Blessed be his holy name! Well may we tremble when we come here, and hear this entreaty to his Father for them, and the extenuation offered, "they know not what they do." Do you say "It is not possible for man to be elevated to this degree?" It is possible, and was actually exemplified in the death of Stephen. When he was covered with bruises, was bleeding, and almost fainting in death, he cried, with a loud voice, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Well might such an one as he, in the last moments, say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This is truly rising above the world and above unaided human nature; by the grace of God, attaining to the divine nature; triumphing over the first Adam, by the power of the second, the Lord from heaven. While we were enemies, Christ died for the ungodly; and, while he was dying, he prayed for these enemies, "O, my Father, forgive them: they know not what they do!" In view of this, how can there be a human being that does not love Jesus? How can hardness of heart and impenitence turn away from this unbounded love?

Before he expires, he cries again: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which, translated, is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In the midst of bitter and most unrelenting enemies, in his awful sufferings, he is left alone. No friend on earth attempts to comfort him. Not one even attempts to wipe the blood, mingled with the sweat of death! Not an angel comes near to offer the last comfort! The Father's face is turned away! His enemies are left to themselves to [163] show what they will do. They reach the climax of enormity, and show what the race would come to left in their hands.

They lift their eyes once more, and view him. He cries with a loud voice, breathes the last time, gives the last struggle; his head falls on his breast; he hangs in a quiver for a moment, and is gone. Jesus died! All stand in painful silence! There was a great earthquake! The rocks were rent! The vail in the temple is split in two from the top to the bottom. Darkness spreads down over the whole land from the sixth till the ninth hour. The centurion, witnessing all these things, exclaims, "Certainly, this man was the Son of God." His friends are disheartened. In disappointment and gloom, they turn away, saying, "We thought it was he who was to have redeemed Israel." They gave up all as lost, and turned away to their former avocations. The enemies were exultant and in triumph. All the powers of sin, darkness, and rebellion against God, of earth and hell, are in triumphant array. As they view it, they have ended his work and defeated his plan. He is cold and silent in death, and his body quietly lays in Joseph's new tomb. Little did they comprehend his plans. Little did they think of his founding a kingdom on his own death. They thought all was secure. All remained quiet till the dawn of the third day. The mighty question, involving the foundation of the kingdom, is in debate. Will he rise? His enemies on earth, and all those in the vast abyss of perdition, say no. Even his few and discouraged friends on earth are not expecting it. But all the principalities of the upper world, the mighty hierarchs about the throne, affirm he will rise. The time has come for the trial of the question--the final decision. An angel of God descends, and rolls away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. The Roman soldiers, on guard, fall prostrate as dead men. The earth trembles! Jesus rose from the dead! The Lord is alive! A great number of the old saints, whose bodies rested in their graves about Jerusalem--as some have [164] supposed about one hundred and forty-four thousand--rose, and were seen by many in the holy city after Jesus rose; as if the Lord intended giving a grander and fuller demonstration than his own resurrection, by itself, would have been of the resurrection from the dead. A resurrection for the human race is secured and now demonstrated.

This grand transaction settles the question. The Lord was condemned by men. They inflicted their penalty. He appealed the case to the high court of heaven--to God, the Judge of all. He reversed the decision, and

removed the penalty, which was death, raising him from the dead. He was justified by the Spirit--declared innocent. After about forty days he ascended to heaven; was coronated, crowned Lord of all; received a name which is above every name--that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, both of things in heaven and things on earth. On the great Pentecost, the brightest day for this world the Lord ever made, the Holy Spirit descended, and made an open vindication before his persecutors, the Jews, out of every nation under heaven, declaring that God had raised him from the dead, and exalted him to his own right hand.

The patriarchal dispensation had been given, and lasted about twenty-five hundred years. The Mosaic dispensation, exclusively to the Jews, then followed, and extended over about fifteen hundred years more. During this period, the nations, apart from the seed of Abraham, were left to themselves, to work out the great problem touching what man can do, unaided by any system from God. In the end of the ages, God sent his only Son to make his last appeal, in the dispensation of mercy and grace, to the human race; and, so to speak, the gospel is the last effort of divine benevolence to reclaim and save fallen and sinful humanity. It comes, in its mighty truths and facts, surrounded by the most stupendous and grand displays of supernatural powers, signs, wonders, and mighty miracles, confirming [165] its claims to divine authority, appealing to the human understanding. It thus appeals to the reason of man to convince him of its supreme authority. It points him to the inevitable ruin to which he is hastening, the eternal perdition before him, and the devouring flames that shall lash him forever if he obeys not the Gospel of the grace of God. But its last appeal is to the affections. It tells him that while he was yet in his sins, without God, and without hope in the world, God loved him--so loved him, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on him might not perish, but have everlasting life that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly; and that he now is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance--that, in infinite kindness and compassion, the Lord stands all the day long stretching forth his hand to a gainsaying people, exclaiming, "What more could I have done that I have not done?"

He has made a full and perfect atonement for sin. In the end of the ages, he has made one sin-offering to purge us forever from our sins. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. He now makes his last appeal to our affections. Can we not, and will we not love him, who first loved us? Shall any man be found so hardened and abandoned that he can not love him who withheld not his own Son, but gave him up freely for us all? Can any man, who has the heart of a man in him, look at this I last appeal to the affections of man as he hung, suspended between the heavens and the earth on that ignominious tree of the cross, crowned with thorns and robed in purple, till he breathed the last breath, gave the last struggle, and expired, and not love him? Can any human being, not perfectly callous and under the influence of total apathy--any one not wholly past feeling--view him, as the Roman spear pierces his side, and his warm heart's blood streams down like water on the ground, [166] and not love him? How can any human being turn away from our Lord and refuse to love him?

This is God's last exhibition of mercy; the last offer of divine compassion. The man who closes his eyes to it, hardens his heart against it, and finally resists it; turns his back on it, spurns it, and dashes it from him, resists God's last and greatest exhibition of love, of kindness, and compassion, and is beyond the reach of redemption. The power of truth can not penetrate his heart. The power of reasoning can not move his understanding, and the most affectionate, merciful, and compassionate appeal can not move his heart. The resources of infinite mercy and grace have been expended and lost on him, and failed to reclaim him. Divine goodness can not impress his soul. Love can not move his heart. Tenderness and kindness are

wasted on him. He is like a prodigal son, whose father has wasted a fortune on him; who despises his mother's tears and his father's prayers; turns away from all the love and affection of a kind father and mother; despises all their entreaties, and rushes on in his folly. His end is utter ruin. So the man who resists the truth of God, the grace, mercy, and compassion of his beneficent Creator and Benefactor, is an abandoned man. He has passed the Rubicon. To him the door is closed. The voice of mercy is shut. No more appeals of love and compassion forever to his soul. He is becoming worse and worse, and is given over to work all uncleanness with greediness. He is left to continue his folly to his heart's content, and then lament it forever.

Soon the canvas will be changed. His folly will all lay open before him, and he will see the utter ruin he has invoked on his own head. He will then exclaim, God loved me; Jesus died for me; the Gospel was preached to me; holy men exhorted me, prayed for me, and wept over me, and tried to induce me to turn to the Lord--tried to save me. They portrayed the sufferings of the Saviour before me, and made their best appeals to me. The sick and the dying warned [167] me, and pleaded with me, but I would not hear. The harvest is now past; the summer is now ended, and I am not saved. I am left to deplore my waywardness forever. The Lord has turned away his lovely face. The voice of mercy has ceased. The door of grace is closed. No more kind and compassionate invitations will be given. Adieu to all that is good, and pure, and holy forever. O man, whoever you are, standing aloof from God, turn, turn; why will you die? While it is an acceptable time, and a day of salvation, turn and live forever. [168]

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