

The Ladder

by Henry Law

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus Christ and the use of Him for hourly help, as well as the danger of false ladders and the necessity of escaping from hell.

Scripture: Genesis 28:12, Numbers 32:23, Psalm 139:23, John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8

Topics: "Salvation Through Christ", "Avoiding False Idols"

Description

Henry Law preaches about Jacob's dream of the ladder reaching to heaven, symbolizing the connection between God and man through Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the consequences of sin and the importance of staying on the path of godliness to avoid misery and trouble. Law highlights the comfort and salvation found in Jesus, who blots out sin with His blood and provides a way for believers to ascend to God and receive His blessings. He urges believers to hold fast to Jesus, the only true Savior, and warns against false ladders that lead away from God.

Transcript

"Jacob had a dream in which he saw a ladder resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." Genesis 28:12

The voice which cannot err, denounces, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Thus, by eternal law, misery stalks in transgression's rear. Out of the Gospel-path, our feet are in furrows sown with woe. Godliness is a quiet haven. Departure from it is a sea of trouble. This truth is darkly written on many a sigh and many a tear. The case of Jacob painfully attests it. Behold him a downcast and a lonely wanderer. He treads a cheerless, solitary way. A journey is before him--long and perilous. He tenderly sorrows for delights behind him. He tremblingly forebodes the evils of tomorrow. But his keenest anguish is an upbraiding conscience. He leaves his home, because he first left his God.

O my soul, bear all things, suffer much, suffer long; but never venture, by ungodly schemes and ungodly guile, to run before the pillar and the cloud. The sin of man hastens not the set purposes of God. No, it rather stays the hand upraised to bless, and arms it with a chastening scourge. Perhaps the declining sun never withdrew its light from one more deeply in gloom than Jacob when he paused at Luz. The canopy of heaven was his only roof--the bare earth his couch--the rugged stone his pillow. Instead of a tender mother's tender care, he had hardness in its hardest form.

But Jacob was an heir, from everlasting ages, of an everlasting portion which is never lost. Hence an unchanging Friend grieved in his every grief, and marked with sympathy his every step. The Lord, whose love is wisdom, and whose wisdom is love, leads His children into depths for their good; but leaves them not in depths to their hurt. It was so with Jacob. It will be so while saints on earth need to be brought low, that they may more securely rise.

Sleep closes his eyes. But in the night-watches marvelous teachings gladden the unclosed eye of faith. "Jacob had a dream in which he saw a ladder resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven." Here was no obscure sign of Him, who comforts most by revelations of Himself. The seed of the Woman, the Blessing of the Earth, the Covenant of His people is unfolded in clearer emblem. The Redeemer is displayed wondrous in His person, His work, His grace. Thus the patriarch found, as many find, that the absence of man is the nearness of God, and that the dark pages of trial are inscribed with new lessons of love. He arises, and exclaims, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."

Reader! this image, so radiant in Gospel-truth, vanished not when morning came. It has a power to teach in every age, and to make each lonely spot a Bethel to the pilgrim's heart.

Ponder well this Ladder. Another like it, earth never saw. Mark its extent. It unites the worlds of Deity and man. It connects our sin-vile hovels with the abode of the Eternal. Resting on the ground, which our feet defile, it rises and stretches upward, and pierces the skies, and mounts to the very throne of God! As such it pictures Him, who is at once the Highest of the high, and the Lowliest of the lowly--who, while he thinks it not robbery to be Jehovah's fellow, counts it all joy to be the poor man's kinsman. It shows Jesus, in the miracle of His person--man, without ceasing to be God--God, without scorning to be man. These are blessed tidings! Hold them fast, as the anchor of all hope--hold them up, as the beacon of all salvation--hold them forth, as realities of grandest significance.

Our Jesus is the mighty God! All that there is in the Godhead of power, and might, and wisdom, and love, and dominion has been His, and must be His forever. Eternity is His birth-place. Heaven is His home. His strength is Omnipotence. His arm is Infinity. His eye is All-seeing. His ear is All-hearing. His mind is Omniscience. He wills, and it is done. He puts on glory for a crown; and the brightness of that diadem is the redemption of souls. Think forever, and you reach not the threshold of His vastness. Adore forever, and you touch not the skirts of His praises. The SUMMIT of this Ladder is Jesus reigning, the ever living God.

Observe, too, that a Savior less than this, could have been no Savior for a sin-stained soul. For what is sin? It is an infinite evil, because it outrages every infinite attribute of God. Hence, it is inseparably linked with infinite woe. Oh! who can tell the boundlessness of its dread results. It scales the heavens, and awakens wrath. It goes down to hell, and kindles inextinguishable flames. It rolls on, a ceaseless tide, throughout eternity. A moment did it. But no ages can undo it. Who then can bear it away? The touch of man makes it more sinful. Angels' efforts are as a straw before a rock. But Jesus comes. His blood is sprinkled, and it vanishes. He hurls it from Him, and it is no more found. Why? Because Jesus is God. If the height of heaven were the pulpit; if the pealing thunder were the voice; if the universe were the audience; no more worthy utterance could sound, than that the blood of Jesus blots out sin, because the blood of Jesus is the blood of God.

Hence the delights which Jesus gives to the awakened heart. It is conscious of iniquities towering to the skies. But, in the merits of a Savior-God, a grave is found to bury all. Hence, too, we learn why many think

so little of this great salvation, and are content with a mock shelter of their own construction. They are dead as to what sin is. But when the Spirit once strikes the conscience with its sin-discovering rod, there can be no peace but in a divine refuge, no rest but under infinite covert. Christ, and Christ only, is such refuge, and such covert. I fear, that to many this is a hidden truth. If once men saw it, they might dare to sport with the lightning, or to wrestle with the whirlwind; but they would not dare to trample on a Savior-God.

This image proclaims Jesus as invested also with our nature. The Ladder set up on the earth, is Jesus very man, as truly as He is very God. Yes, our Creator is our brother, that He may redeem us. Man must die. Jesus hangs on the cross--man, that He may represent; God, that He may render a sufficient sacrifice for man's sin. His Deity enables. His manhood qualifies. The one is all-sufficiency. The other is all-fitness. Thus He cancels every debt, and makes all payment, and endures all punishment, and exhausts the whole curse, and works a glorious righteousness, and rescues all His sheep from the jaws of hell, and exalts His spouse in spotless luster to the throne of His glory!

Next, the common uses of the Ladder instruct much in the divine art of using Jesus for hourly help. By the Ladder we leave the lower ground. By it we rise to things which are above. Just so, by Jesus there is open passage for our souls and services from our lowest estate, to Zion's heavenly heights. Sin not only left us prostrate, with no means to soar: but it fixed an intervening gulf, which unaided man could never pass. But Jesus interposes, and distance disappears. Believer, your heart's desire is that your prayers and praises may speak to God. Place them on Jesus, and they fly aloft. None can check their ascending speed. They are breathed below, and instantly resound on high. You long that your tears of penitence and sighs of shame may be heeded, where mercy reigns. There is no hindrance. Mourn with godly sorrow, clinging unto Jesus, and you melt a heavenly Father's heart! You strive in word and work to glorify His name. Labor with every effort intermixed with Jesus, and nothing can be done in vain. How sweet is it to the eye of faith, to see its every cry, and hope, and deed, thus carried buoyant to the court of God!

Soon you must die. Be it so. Commit your departing spirit to the care of Jesus, and, released from its cage of clay, it will mount with eagle-wings, and tarry not until the portals of eternal day are passed.

But the Ladder also affords means of DESCENT. We need supplies from above. Through what channel can they come? Jesus alone presents an open course. Through Him the Spirit is outpoured. The light which dispels our darkness--all views of saving love--strength to begin and persevere on the heavenward race--the joys, which make this wilderness to blossom as the rose, all wing their downward flight by this connecting Ladder! The believer stands upon this Ladder, and voices run along it, each assuring him that his iniquities are pardoned, his person accepted, his soul saved. By this path the promises come down into his willing hand, and answers tell him that his prayers are heard. By this way ministering angels hasten to encamp around, and to beat back the host of unseen foes. O my soul, can you enough bless Jesus, who thus unites a blessed people with a blessing God?

Reader! this subject is personal and practical. Tell me, then, have you found, do you duly prize, do you daily use these heaven-wrought steps? The solemn significance of the solemn question is this--Have you by faith grasped Jesus? Are you by faith cleaving unto Him? Faith is the eye which sees the Ladder--the hand which touches it--the strength which holds it--the feet which mount it. Has the Holy Spirit opened to you this figure, which was new life to Jacob? There is a ready test. Is the world beneath your tread? Do you trample on its love, its fashions, its maxims, its principles? Feet set on a Ladder, no more rest on earth! The man, who is in Christ is high above the world. "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the

world."

There is another test. Is yours an ascending life? On the ladder there is upward movement. So the believer rises, step by step, from grace to grace. As there is no progress while one foot cleaves to the dust, so there is no growth in grace while lingering affections adhere to mire. We must be wholly Christ's or none of His.

Again, are your days all effort? There is no mounting without toil. Saints strain every nerve. They run an unwearied race. They wrestle in prayer. Their praises are as the ceaseless rapture of angelic chords. Their zeal flows, as the ocean's tide. They rest not--digging in the mine of Truth, and scattering abroad the riches which they find. Thus they take heaven by holy violence.

Reader! if you are some lazy loiterer, some dreaming slumberer, I tremble for you. Christ worked on earth. Christ works above. As is the Head, so are the members. As is the Lord, so are the servants. Take heed, too, of false ladders. Satan has forged many. Their form is specious. Their height seems heaven-high. But the summit points hell-ward. The steps are rottenness, and soon they break. Salvation's Ladder is only one--Christ Jesus.

Believer, you profess to be on this Ladder. Hold fast. Watch and pray. Some, who seemed to climb well, have ffully fallen. The most perilous slip is from the highest round. Perhaps you are conscious that your foot has slipped. If so, arise and adore God, that you live. Arise and pray for grace, that you may re-ascend.

Unbeliever, you know nothing of this approach to God. You are afar off now. How will you bear to be far off forever? Hear then; and may the Spirit bless the concluding word! There is a Ladder from every sin and every sorrow upon earth. But there is no ladder of escape from hell's wages, and from hell's pains. There are no stairs, by which the rich man may soar to Abraham's bosom. There is no stairway by which Judas can leave "his own place."

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