

## A Suffering Saviour and an Obedient People

Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's Day Evening, June 24, 1866

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:7, 8, 9

The high priest under the law was the typical representative of the Lord Jesus as the great High Priest over the house of God. As such he occupied a very distinguished position. The service and ministrations of the sanctuary were limited to his tribe—the tribe of Levi; and the priesthood was confined to his family—the family of Aaron. To him was restricted the supreme administration of all sacred things, and he was the final arbiter of all controversies. In order therefore that his person and office might be invested with a peculiar sanctity, he was inaugurated with great solemnity, being clothed after an ablution of the whole body with the sacred habiliments, and then anointed with a precious oil, prepared and preserved for this exclusive purpose. Besides the usual priestly dress, there were four garments which he wore peculiar to himself. These were, 1, first, the coat or *robe* of the ephod, on the hem of which were fixed seventy-two golden bells, between which there ran an equal number of golden pomegranates; 2, secondly, the *ephod*, which was a vest made of fine twisted linen, splendidly wrought with gold and purple; and on each shoulder strap was an onyx stone, on which were engraved, six on each stone, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; thirdly, the *breastplate* of judgment of

the same texture and workmanship as the ephod, in which were twelve precious stones, bearing, one on each stone, the names of the twelve tribes; and, fourthly, a *crown* or mitre, having on it a plate of pure gold, on which was inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord." These garments were made "for glory and for beauty" (Exod. 28:2), and were distinct from the "holy garments" (Lev. 16:4) of linen which he wore on the solemn day of atonement. He was thus, as wearing two distinct sets of garments, typical of Christ in his humiliation and his exaltation, of what he was and what he is. Clad in his holy linen garments, he sacrificed the sin-offering and took the blood within the veil; but when he had made an end of reconciling the holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar, had laid the sins of the children of Israel on the head of the goat and sent it into the wilderness, then he put off his linen garments and arrayed himself in his garments of glory and beauty, offered the burnt offering. Thus, in his linen garments he represented Christ in his humiliation when he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and in his beautiful garments, Christ in his present exaltation and glory.

But his chief office was to offer sacrifice, and especially that peculiar one on the great day of atonement, to which I have already alluded, when he entered within the veil into the most holy place, taking therein, amidst a cloud of incense, the blood of the bullock and of the goat, which he sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat. In all these and various other points, into which I need not now enter, he stood forth as the typical representative of that great High Priest who, having finished the work which the Father gave him to do, is now in the presence of God for us. But his priesthood was necessarily imperfect. It was, at best, but a dim, shadowy representation of what is exceedingly great and glorious, and therefore was in itself necessarily weak and defective; and though full of meaning to an enlightened eye and a spiritual

heart, yet to the carnal worshipper was but a mere routine of external performances. But besides the inherent imperfection of the ministration, there was the infirmity of the minister. Though separated in so solemn a manner to the service of the sanctuary, though called upon by every constraint to manifest the greatest purity of life and conversation, and to conduct himself in all things with such holy wisdom as became the visible representative of him who was to come, yet, as a partaker of our fallen humanity, the high priest was but a frail and fallible man. Aaron himself, though called in so special a manner by God himself to his high and holy office, manifested on more than one occasion great infirmity both of character and conduct. He complied, for instance, with the sinful wishes of the people in the matter of the golden calf, when Moses was in the mount with God, and, so to speak, veiled and cloaked their sin by fashioning the object of their idolatrous worship with a graving tool, building an altar before it, and making a proclamation, "To-morrow is a feast to the Lord." He took part with Miriam against Moses, when they spake against him because of the Ethiopian woman whom Moses had married; and, as it would appear through jealousy, said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not also spoken by us?" (Num. 12:1, 2.) Ho joined Moses also in that remarkable act which so offended the Lord when Moses said to the people, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" just as if it was *they* who did it, and not God by them. I do not name these things to cast any reproach upon the name and character of Aaron, but merely to show how full of sin and imperfection the first and greatest of the high priests was. His two sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange fire; and though they had been anointed at the same time with Aaron their father, for that act of presumption died at the very altar, for fire went out from the Lord and devoured them. We know what a poor, weak, and fallible man Eli was, and what vile sinners his two

sons, Hophni and Phinehas, manifested themselves to be. I need not pursue farther the history of the high priests, or speak of what they were when the Lord was upon earth. I have said enough to show from the word of truth that they were not only frail and fallible, but in many cases very sinful men, and as such utterly unworthy to execute the high and holy office committed to their trust. But no doubt there was a purpose in the mind of God in permitting human imperfection and sin thus to develop themselves, and that these instances should be put upon record, that we might learn from them that man in his very best estate and entrusted with the highest and holiest office is but vanity. Our eyes are therefore taken off the type to look at the Anti-type; to cease from man and fix our eyes wholly and solely upon the Lord. God had determined in his own mind to bring forward and reveal at the appointed time another High Priest—his only begotten Son, in whom should meet every perfection both of Godhead and Manhood. He was determined to raise up a faithful priest, that should do according to that which was in his heart and in his mind (1 Sam. 2:35); even him to whom he had sworn and would not repent: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek." (Psa. 110:4.)

But I need not enter at any greater length into these points, as it would not only take up too much time, but would divert us too much from the subject before us. I shall therefore come at once to our text, in which I think we may see these three things, which I shall endeavour, as the Lord may give me ability, to lay open and set before you:—

I.—*First, the prayerful and suffering experience of our Redeemer in the flesh:* "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death."

II.—*Secondly*, the *lesson* which our gracious Lord *learnt in that school* of prayer and suffering—*Obedience*. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

III.—*Thirdly*, the blessed *fruit and result* of these sufferings of our Lord, and of the victory obtained by them: "He became the *author of eternal salvation* unto all them *that obey him*."

I.—There are two subjects connected with our gracious Lord on which I always wish to speak with very great caution and in a spirit of holy reverence. To a heavenly mind, to a chastened, humble spirit, to one who desires to have the mind of Christ, and to be cast into the mould of divine teaching they are most blessed subjects of contemplation and meditation; yet they are so mysterious in themselves, and so beyond the scope of our comprehension, that we are only safe as we walk strictly within the limits of the written word, and even there tread with the greatest reverence, caution, and circumspection. Those two subjects are, the *sufferings* of Christ and the *temptations* of Christ. As regards myself, I never feel safe in speaking upon either of these two points except so far as I keep as close as I can to the word of truth, for I see how easily I might be betrayed into some error, or, if I escaped that, into some point of doubtful disputation. Unless well instructed in the things of God, and well fenced and guarded by a reverence to his great name, I might easily advance something inconsistent with the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the word of truth. It is so easy to make a little deviation on this side or on that, and so not be kept strictly within the bounds of the inspired word, that I ever wish to speak with great caution; and yet with that firmness of faith and clearness of utterance which become

one who professes to be a steward of the mysteries of God, and desires to feed the church with knowledge and understanding. I hope, therefore, this evening to speak with great caution, and keep as closely as possible to the limits of God's inspired word, that I may say nothing unbecoming God's sacred truth and nothing unbecoming that reverence which we owe to our great High Priest at the right hand of the Father. And yet if we are favoured with a spirit of heavenly wisdom, and can walk in this field with a spiritual mind and a believing heart, receiving the truth of God with the simplicity, docility, and humility of a little child, what a depth of blessing there is in the subject before us! The suffering experience of the Lord, when "in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared," is rich food to a spiritual mind.

But the thought may strike your mind, for such reasonings will sometimes occur, "What need was there for the blessed Lord thus to pray with strong crying and tears? Was he not God as well as man? Was he not the Son of the Father in truth and love? Was there, could there be in his mind any apprehension of failure in his undertaking? Was it not a matter of infinite certainty that he must prevail?" All this I admit. But do you consider what a battle our gracious Lord had to fight? What a conflict, which seemed as it were to rend his very heart asunder? Do you bear in mind what a mighty work he had undertaken to perform, and what was involved in bearing the curse of God's righteous law and enduring the penalty due to the sins of his people, when he stood in their place and stead, and thus to blot out as a thick cloud their transgressions, and as a cloud their sins, and by clothing them with a robe of righteousness, his own obedience, to present them spotless before the face of

infinite Purity?

Now this being the work which he had to do in the garden and upon the cross, the Holy Ghost in the words before us seems to lead our thoughts and hearts into this deep subject by presenting to our view the suffering Redeemer, as engaged alone with God in the depths of his struggling agony. Let us see, then, if by the help of God we may look as it were within the precincts of this place of suffering, and by viewing the agonies and hearing the cries of our gracious Lord, learn something of what the work was which the Father had given him to do, what is the dreadful evil of sin, and from what depths of eternal woe he has redeemed all who believe in his name.

i. To apprehend even in some faint and feeble measure what this was, we must first take a view of his pure and sacred humanity; and we must bear carefully in mind that though his human nature was altogether perfect, and from its very constitution utterly incapable of the least speck, or spot, or stain of impurity, yet it was naturally and inherently weak. The apostle therefore says, that "he was crucified through weakness." (2 Cor. 13:4.) Remember, however, that weakness was not imperfection in him, though it is imperfection in us; for when we speak of the weakness of Christ's human nature, we mean its weakness as compared with the strength and power of his divine nature. We therefore carefully remove from it all idea of imperfection when we speak of the weakness of the humanity of Christ; in the same way as when we speak of his being subject to such infirmities as hungering, thirsting, and being tired, we carefully exclude all idea of his being subject to any but sinless infirmities. Rightly viewed then, as received into a reverent and believing heart, there is something very blessed in contemplating the weakness of Christ. Hart, therefore, to

whom was given to see and know so much of the sufferings of Jesus, beautifully says,

"The strength of God is owned by all,  
But who his weakness knows?"

1. But what are we to understand by the expression "in the days of his flesh?" This leads us to the inquiry, 1, What is meant by "the flesh" of Christ; and, 2, what we are to understand by "the days of his flesh?" By "the flesh" of Christ, then, we may understand chiefly two things: 1, The whole of his pure humanity, as in such passages as, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14); "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16); "Of whom was Christ, according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:5.) But as this humanity the Lord still continues to wear, carrying it with him into heaven, though exalted and glorified beyond all apprehension, we cannot understand by "the flesh" of Christ merely his human nature. It therefore means, as applied to him in the text, the weaknesses and infirmities, of course I mean the sinless infirmities, to which he was subject when here below. And by "the days of his flesh" we may understand, not merely the whole time of his sojourning on earth, but especially those last days when in the garden and upon the cross all his sorrows, trials, and sufferings came, as it were, to a head, and thickened upon him. It was then in these last days of his abiding in the flesh that he offered up the prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears mentioned in the text. They were a part of his oblation, priestly acts of intercession, and therefore not merely supplications for himself, but necessary adjuncts of his propitiatory sacrifice. He had taken upon himself to stand in our law place and stead, and to endure what but for him his people must have endured to all eternity. O how great a work was this! To expiate transgression, to put away the



wrath of God, to appease the ever-burning indignation against sin of Him who is a consuming fire, fully to satisfy the claims of infinite justice and the demands of a devouring law—O what a work was this for the Lord to do! How little do we know, how less do we feel of the holiness of God, of his terrible Majesty, of his inflexible justice, of his fiery wrath against sin and transgression, and the difficulty, so to speak, of so satisfying these claims that mercy might rejoice against judgment, and grace superabound over the aboundings of sin. It is only when we view by faith the struggles, agonies, and sufferings of the incarnate Son of God when he had to grapple with and overcome these difficulties, that we seem for a short period to see and feel a little of the dreadful evil of sin. Our Lord often prayed in the days of his flesh, and on one occasion spent a whole night in prayer unto God; but he never prayed as in the garden, for his prayers then were attended with most vehement, earnest, and intense supplications, as Luke tells us: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as drops (or rather large clots, as the word means) of blood falling upon the ground." (Luke 22:44.) And what was the purport of his prayers but that he might be supported in the hour of agony upon the cross, that he might fully do the work committed to him, that the honour of God might be in every point consulted and his glory manifested, that his sacrifice and bloodshedding and obedience might be accepted, and the whole will of God in the redemption and salvation of his people perfectly accomplished? Our Lord felt the weakness of his humanity, for though in union with his eternal Deity, though most blessedly upheld and supported by the power and strength and consolation of the Holy Ghost, yet it was inherently weak, and an experience of its weakness was a part of the sufferings that he endured. Having then to bear as laid upon this weakness the whole weight of imputed sin, the whole curse of the law, the whole indignation of the

Almighty, our Lord was brought to a spot where he needed special support. To be brought through that work safely, honourably, successfully, agreeably to the will of God and in the fullest harmony with the eternal purposes—to this point were the prayers and supplications of our suffering Lord directed; this was the solemn conflict which our gracious Lord had to endure in the garden in its beginning and upon the cross in its finishing. We know what he felt—at least the Holy Ghost has given us an account of that solemn agony in the garden, when he said, as in a moment of weakness, "Let this cup pass from me." It was so bitter in contemplation; it was so full of unmitigated wrath; the ingredients were so mingled with the anger of the Almighty against sin and the manifestation of his displeasure against every one who was chargeable with it, that as he stood there and then as our substitute, in our place, to endure what we must have endured without him, and to bear the whole weight of eternal wrath and indignation, which must have sunk us and all with us, were we millions, to a deserved hell, that he needed the special interposition of the help of God to hold him up as he drank it to the very dregs. It was to obtain this help that he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears; and it was the vehemency of the conflict which made the blood fall from his brow and tears drop from his eyes, and his whole soul engaged in an agony of mingled grief and horror, fear and supplication, each increasing and stimulating the other, and the whole poured forth with prayers, cries, weeping, and supplications unto him that was able to save him from death: not from the death that he came to die, but to save him from everything connected with the original sentence of death, as involving in it the wrath of God and its consequences.

The gospels, in the simplicity of their narrative, speak but little of the inward sufferings of Christ. They give us an

account of his sufferings in the garden, of his "being sorrowful and very heavy," or, as the word means, "overwhelmed with anguish," of "his being sore amazed," and "exceedingly sorrowful even unto death," of his being "in an agony and praying more earnestly," and begging of his heavenly Father that this cup might pass from him; but they do not enter into the cause of his sufferings. And so with respect to his crucifixion; they make little mention of his sufferings of body or soul, though they record his dolorous cry when forsaken of God, and his bodily thirst. Where, then, shall we find recorded the suffering experience of Christ? Clearly in the Psalms, such as the 18th, 22nd, 40th, 69th, 102nd, and others, in which the Holy Ghost has by anticipation recorded the experience and language of the Son of God in the depths of his suffering. There we have his prayers and supplications: "Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me." (Psa. 69:1, 2.) There we have his strong crying: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." (Psa. 22:1, 2.) There we have his weeping: "For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thy indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down." (Psa. 102:9, 10.) And there, especially in Psalm 22, we have set before us in the most lively colours what his holy soul endured when he was bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.

ii. But let me now speak a few words on that difficult expression, "Unto him who was able to save him from death." This of course was God to whom he addressed his prayers. But what is meant here by the ability of God to

save? And what is intended by the death from which he besought God to save him?

1. By the ability of God to save we may understand two things: 1, the *actual* power of God; 2, the *moral* power of God. The first is God's omnipotence, the second is God's sovereignty. Now to which of these two powers of God did Christ address himself? To both, but especially to the latter. God was able to save him by his omnipotence—by putting forth his absolute power; and upon this almighty power the Lord cast himself in the extremity of his distress and weakness. But he cast himself more particularly upon God's sovereignty, as displayed in his will, for he came to do his will. To him, therefore, he had recourse in the omnipotence of his power and the sovereignty of his will. His faith embraced the power, his obedience submitted itself to the will of God.

2. But what was the "death" from which he prayed to be saved? It was not natural death, for he came on purpose to die, but moral death. *i.e.*, it was not the dissolution of body and soul, but all that was implied in the sentence, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." In taking upon him to obey the law, our Lord put himself under the curse of the law; and this curse was death. All, therefore, that was contained in the curse of the law, in the sentence of death, our Lord had as much to sustain as though he had been actually guilty of every sin committed against the law. From this death in the consequences of it, as he reeled under its dreadful weight, he prayed God to save him, that he might come out of it, be delivered from it, and thus, as the surety of his people, might deliver them from it.

iii. But we now come to the acceptance of his prayers and supplications. "And was heard in that he feared." There is

something in my mind so extremely mysterious and yet so divinely blessed in the expression, "in that he feared," that I must, if the Lord enable me, give it a few moments' consideration. It is right to mention that there is some little difficulty as to the right rendering of the expression. The word means in the original not so much fear, as indicating dread or apprehension, as a holy reverence and tender cautiousness. It means literally the great care with which we handle brittle vessels, and, as used in the New Testament, signifies a reverential fear of God. It is used, for instance, of Noah, where he is said to be "moved with fear" (Heb. 11:7), and is translated "godly fear" in those words, "whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. 12:28.) It does not, therefore, mean fear in any such sense of the word as would imply a servile dread. It does not mean that our gracious Lord was possessed with that servile dread of the Almighty which reprobates feel and those who never were partakers of the grace of God. But our Lord, as an exemplar of every grace of the Spirit, was possessed of that holy reverence and godly fear in its abundant measure of which we have but a small portion. Now just in proportion to the depth of the grace that was in him, the power of God that rested upon him, and the operations and influence of the Holy Ghost in his soul, so was the measure of holy reverence and godly fear which dwelt in his sacred humanity. Contemplating, therefore, the greatness of the work; having before his eyes not so much the bodily sufferings of the cross as all the mental agonies—the distress of soul, the conflict with the law in its load and curse, the indignation of the Almighty against sin in the person of the Surety, the hidings of his Father's face, and the withdrawal of the light of his countenance,—foreseeing all these dolorous sufferings of the cross, and tasting the first drops of that shower which was so soon to fall upon his sacred head, it seemed as if his holy soul was filled with the most solemn reverence and deep

apprehension of the Majesty of God. This is the fear of which our text speaks. It is in the margin "his piety." But reverence, godly fear, holy apprehension, and tender awe convey the meaning of the word much better than the expression "piety." It was prophesied of him that the "Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord, and should make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." (Isa. 11:1, 2.) Thus his prayers, his cries, his supplications, and his tears rose up with sweet acceptance into the ears of his Father, because they came out of a heart filled with reverence and godly fear under the promptings and influences of that eternal Spirit who wrought in him every grace both in its possession and its exercise, and through whom he offered himself without spot to God. The church foreseeing this, prayed in spirit for him: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice." (Psa. 20:1, 2, 3.) In answer to these petitions, "the Lord saved his anointed, and heard him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand;" for when the sorrows of hell compassed him about and the snares of death prevented him, he could say, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears." (Psa. 18:6.) O the power of prayer, and what an example has the Lord set before his praying people; for as God heard and answered and saved him, so will he surely hear, answer and save them.

II.—But I must now pass on to our second point, which was, to consider the lesson which our gracious Lord learnt in the school of prayer and suffering. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to make the remark but I could wish that our translators had used the word "was" instead of "were." "Though he were a Son," conveys a little doubt, of which there is none in the original. If we say of any one, "Though he *were* a good man," it almost implies that he might not have been a good man. But if we say, "Though he *was* a good man," that stamps it as a certainty that he was such. So I could wish that our good translators had just put "was" instead of "were;" because the Lord Jesus Christ was God's Son beyond doubt or uncertainty. It was because he was the Son of God, his own true and proper Son, that he was a suitable mediator between God and man. His eternal Sonship and Deity invested with infinite value his work upon the cross. The tears which he shed, the prayers which he put up, the strong crying which he poured forth, were all stamped with the intrinsic value of his Deity, as well as perfumed by the incense of the Eternal Spirit through whom he offered himself without spot unto God; and therefore rose up before the eyes of his heavenly Father not as the prayers and tears and cries of simply his humanity, but as the tears and prayers and cries of the Son of God, and thus were to him for a sweet smelling savour. (Eph. 5:2.)

i. There are three points connected with the Person and work of our gracious Lord which we can rightly understand only by heavenly teaching, and only truly receive by a divine faith. These are, 1, What he was before all worlds as "the Son of the Father in truth and love;" 2, What he became in his humiliation when he was made flesh and dwelt amongst us; and, 3, What he is as now glorified and exalted to the right hand of the Father. All these three things are in our text; for in it we see, 1, his original and eternal Sonship, "Though he was a Son;" 2, His humiliation and incarnation, "In the days of his flesh when he offered up prayers," &c.; and, 3, What

he is as glorified, as I shall presently show from the words, "And being made perfect."

But we are now engaged upon what he was in the days of his flesh, and especially, as I have pointed out, his latter days, when he is said to have "learned obedience by the things that he suffered." Three questions meet us here: What obedience was this? What is meant by Christ's learning it? And how did he learn it by the things that he suffered? Let us consider the second question first.

ii. Obedience may be learnt in three different ways 1, by our coming to know what we knew not before, and thus learn the obedience that is required of us. So David speaks: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." By his chastisements God taught him to know and keep his commandments. But this was not the way in which Christ learnt obedience; for the whole law of God was in his heart, and no command of God was new to him or forgotten by him. But, 2, obedience may be learnt by being instructed, guided, and directed by the blessed Spirit, and by receiving gradually supplies of light and grace, partly by the word and partly by afflictions. But this was not the way in which Christ learnt obedience; for there was in him a fulness of grace, wisdom, and truth so that he needed not to be taught what he had to do, or wanted a perfect readiness of will or mind to do it. 3. But there is a third way of learning obedience, which is by an experience of it in its exercise; and in this way our Lord learnt it.

But what was the obedience which he thus learnt? It was chiefly becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; for this commandment was given him of his Father that he should lay down his life; and he therefore laid it down in a way of obedience to the will and word of God. The



apostle, therefore, applies to his offering of himself those words of his in the Psalms: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." This obedience was an obedience of suffering; and therefore the Lord Jesus is said to have "learnt obedience by the things which he suffered." He thus obtained a full experience of that special obedience which is yielded through suffering, and by enduring the wrath of God he learnt what distress and anguish attend it, and what humility, self-denial, meekness, faith, patience, hope, and love, and every grace of the Holy Spirit are needful to sustain the soul under it.

But O what an exemplar for us; for our gracious Lord had to learn obedience to the will of God by a personal experience of suffering, and especially by an implicit submission to his heavenly Father's will. And what was this will? That he should take upon himself the huge debt which his Bride had incurred by original and actual transgression; that he should offer himself as a ransom price to discharge and put it away; that he should bear our sins in his own body on the tree, with everything which was involved in being made a curse for us; that he should by death overcome Satan who had the power of death, and deliver them who all their life through fear of death were subject to bondage; and that whatever sorrows or sufferings should be in his path he should bear them all, and learn in and by them implicit submission to the will of God. This was the will of God, for he was determined that his Law should be magnified, his justice glorified, his infinite purity and holiness revealed and established; and yet, amidst all and through all his displeasure against sin, that his infinite wisdom, tender pity, everlasting love, and sovereign grace might shine and reign in the happiness of millions through a glorious eternity. This, too, was the joy that was set before Christ, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

By these sufferings in the garden and upon the cross the Lord Jesus was made perfect.

iii. But what perfection was this? Let us endeavour to penetrate into the mind of the Holy Ghost in using this remarkable expression. It occurs in a former part of the Epistle: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10.) The question then arises, What perfection is intended thereby? It clearly does not mean that by these sufferings in the garden and upon the cross our Lord was made perfect as the Son of God, nor perfect as the Son of man, for he was perfect before as possessing infinite perfection in his eternal Godhead, and was endued also with every possible perfection of which his sacred humanity was capable. He needed no perfection to be added to his Godhead: it was not susceptible of it; no perfection to be added to his manhood, for it was "a holy thing" in union with eternal Deity. But he needed to be made perfect as a High Priest, and this in two ways. 1. It was through his sufferings that he was *consecrated* or dedicated in an especial manner to the priesthood, for this corresponds with his own words: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself" (John 17:19); that is, I consecrate or dedicate myself to be their High Priest. I have before observed that the two main offices of the high priest were to offer sacrifice and make intercession. Sacrifice came first; and the suffering of our Lord in the garden and upon the cross were a part of this sacrifice. He was therefore "made perfect through suffering," that is, through his sufferings, blood-shedding, and death he was consecrated to perform that other branch of the priestly office which he now executes. Thus as Aaron was consecrated by the sacrifice of a bullock and a ram, of which the blood was not only poured out at the bottom of the altar and sprinkled upon it, but put

also on his right ear and hand and foot, so was his great and glorious Anti-type consecrated through his own sacrifice and blood-shedding on the cross; and thus being made perfect, or rather, as the word literally means, being perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

2. But the words admit of another sense, viz., that through sufferings, from the personal experience of it, he became a *sympathising* High Priest; as the apostle elsewhere speaks: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Hebrews 4:15.) Thus the Lord, by passing through personal sufferings, experimentally learnt not only obedience, submission, and resignation to the will of God, but to sympathise, feel for, and enter into the trials, sufferings, sorrows, and conflicts of his afflicted people here below. Do they feel the curse of the law? He had felt it before them, and can sympathise with them in their sufferings under it. Do they feel their conflicts with Satan? He had those conflicts with the Prince of darkness in the wilderness, and doubtless in the garden and upon the cross, for, speaking of that hour, he said, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me;" and again, "But this is your hour and the power of darkness." Do they know the wrath of God in their conscience so as to make them tremble and quake with apprehension? He knew that wrath when he drank up the bitter cup of which we do but taste. Do they know the weakness of the flesh under painful dispensations, how it needs to be upheld by the mighty power of God, how it requires continual supplies of heavenly grace to support them in the hour of trial, to bear them up and bear them through all they may have to suffer? Now it was necessary that our gracious Lord should know these things by a personal experience of them; that he might learn them in the days of his flesh, and carry that lesson with him into the

courts of bliss; that thus he might be not only the great exemplar of sufferings, but, having himself been an afflicted Head, might sympathise with his afflicted members in all those troubles and sorrows by which they are conformed to his suffering image. It is sweet to see that he still retains the same heart which beat so tenderly here below, as the hymn says:

"That human heart he still retains,  
Tho' thron'd in highest bliss;  
And feels each tempted member's pains;  
For our affliction's his."

We know nothing but what we have experienced, whether in nature or in grace, and especially as regards sufferings, trials, and temptations we must have felt them before we can be said to have any real acquaintance with them. Theory, judgment, observation, reading, conversation, and other exercises of our intellect may give us a certain knowledge of things; but they do not communicate any real acquaintance with them. We must pass into them, through them, and out of them, that we may really and truly know them. As possessing indeed all the perfections of Deity, our Lord knew everything within the scope of omniscience, and therefore perfectly knew what trials and sufferings are; but it was necessary, according to the will and purpose of God, that he should have a personal acquaintance with every trial, temptation, and form of suffering which any one of his people might go through, that he might sympathise feelingly with them, through himself having personally experienced them. And thus he sits in heavenly bliss with a human heart, tender, affectionate, feeling, and sympathising, as having himself passed through every phase of suffering, known every trial, been exposed to every temptation, and having had a personal experience of everything that shall befall any

of his living family.

This is a mysterious subject. I do not profess to understand or explain it; but I receive it upon the testimony of God's word, and as such, I see in it a great blessedness: mines of grace, treasures of encouragement, a rich source of divine consolation. If you and I are in a trial, there is a sympathising High Priest for us at the right hand of the Father. The widow, the orphan, the poor, the needy, the distressed, and the exercised—whatever be their affliction, there is a merciful and faithful High Priest, who can feel for and with them, whose tender, loving, and affectionate heart is melted with a sympathising sense of what they are suffering here below. When Paul of Tarsus was persecuting his saints, the head in heaven felt the blow struck at the body on earth, and said "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" The Head felt what the members suffered. Now to believe this, and in trial, suffering, and exercise to go to a tender, sympathising, affectionate, and loving High Priest, and thus realise his pity toward us, what strength and support it gives. Do we feel the burden of sin? He felt it. Are we crying under a sense of guilt? He felt it. He had indeed no personal guilt; but he felt all the guilt we can feel by imputation. Does the world frown? It frowned upon him. Do men persecute you? They persecuted him. Are you oppressed? He was oppressed also. Are you scoffed at, mocked, jeered, insulted? He had all these things to endure. Does God hide his face? Is your soul in darkness? Are you full of fear? He passed through all these things. This made him sympathising, tender-hearted, loving, kind, and affectionate. We know there is something very sweet and soothing in human sympathy. The widow does not go to the bride to get a word of comfort; she goes to her fellow widow. The man in difficulties can talk best to the man who has passed through the same. A wealthy merchant and a poor tradesman are

unsuitable associates. Hard hearts are poor companions for broken hearts, and unfeeling professors for tender consciences. A man who stands high on the hill of presumption is not a good associate for one who lies low in the vale of humility. Like loves like. If your soul is exercised with temporal or spiritual troubles, and has afflictions, difficulties, trials, and perplexities, you can talk best with those who have some personal experience of them; and as you get together and sometimes unfold to each other your mutual trials, you seem to comfort one another. Thus we find from experience that sympathy has a very comforting effect, and that there is nothing so repulsive when in trouble and difficulty as to meet with a hard heart and an unfeeling conscience. But O what a sympathising High Priest there is in the courts above for poor sinners here below. We may tell him all our cares. The secret sins that you are obliged to keep locked up in your own bosom: the painful temptations you are exercised with; the various things that cut deep into your conscience, which you cannot breath into any one's ear—all are open to this sympathising High Priest, all may be spread before that throne of grace, on which he ever sits as our advocate with the Father.

Thus by suffering, he was made perfect—not only perfect as consecrated thereby to be an ever living intercessor, but perfect in his sympathies, perfect as a High Priest adapted to all our wants and woes, as distinguished from an imperfect high priest, such as were the typical priests under the law. Some were bad men, as Hophni and Phinehas; some were persecutors, as Annas and Caiaphas; when, therefore, the poor Israelite went to the high priest, he might have no sympathy for him, but rather be oppressed by him. Eli could not sympathise with afflicted Hannah; and Ananias commanded them who stood by to smite Paul on the mouth. But all who fear God have now a High Priest who is touched

with a feeling of our infirmities, and so can sympathise with us in our temptations and afflictions.

III.—But let us now advance to our last point, which was to show, from the words of the text, that being perfected, Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

i. In my explanation of Christ's being perfected through suffering, I pointed out that this perfection embraced two things: 1, his being perfected as fully consecrated to the work and office of the priesthood; and, 2, as being thereby qualified to be a sympathising Head. There were three things by which our Lord consecrated himself; for though he was a man of sorrows from the manger to the last passover, it was only after his partaking of it with his disciples that he was fully consecrated to the office of Priest. These three things were prayer, suffering, and sacrifice. He consecrated himself through prayer, as recorded John 17, through suffering in the garden, and through sacrifice on the cross. He thus became the author of eternal salvation; for salvation was perfectly accomplished by his obedience, sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death. And now he lives, and now he rules, and now he reigns at the right hand of the Father to send down the benefits and blessings of this salvation thus wrought out. Observe that it is an eternal salvation. It was fully accomplished upon the cross in a time-state; but from the dignity of the Person of Christ, and the perfection of his work, it stretches itself into eternity. In it there is no deficiency, shortcoming, or imperfection. He himself declared of it with expiring lips, "It is finished;" and if finished, finished for ever. It embraces the whole election of grace. It has washed away all their sins, blotted out all their iniquities, cast all their transgressions behind God's back, and clothed their persons with a robe of eternal righteousness. Thus it is

"eternal salvation;" and Jesus is the Author of it, its sole undivided Beginner, and its sole undivided Finisher.

ii. But how are we to know who these elect are? Do they bear any special marks to distinguish them from their fellow men? They do; and observe what the mark is: "Unto all them that obey him." This marks the character for whom this eternal salvation is obtained and provided. But what is this obedience, for it is of great importance to ascertain accurately its true nature?

1. It is, then, first, the obedience of *faith*; for this is the first act of obedience. To produce this is the grand object of the preached gospel; for it is "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:26.) The Lord, therefore, in the preached gospel, bids us, invites us, and enables us to believe in him. He presents himself to us in the glass of the gospel; he holds himself forth therein as the author of eternal salvation; and he says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else;" "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life." These are his words in which he holds himself forth in the gospel as the object of our faith; and when the blessed Spirit is pleased to raise up that faith in our soul whereby we embrace him as the Son of God, take hold of him, bring him into our heart, and give him sweet entertainment there, then we have salvation as a manifested reality. Thus we obey him, because we obey his invitations, believe his word, rest upon his promises, twine round his Person, look to his blood, and hang wholly upon his grace. This is fulfilling his promise: "As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me."

2. Out of this obedience of faith flows all *practical* obedience.



This is manifested by obeying his precepts, walking in his ordinances, seeking to glorify him by a life, conduct, and conversation becoming the gospel; making his word to be the rule of our life, his will to be our guide, and what he has laid down as the path in which we should walk as the path in which we ever desire our feet to be found. Now there is no rest or peace except in thus obeying him. Get out of the path of obedience, and you get into the path of misery. Cease to believe, I mean in your feelings, and cease to obey him by any temporal deviation, slip, or fall, or by being entangled in the snares of sin and Satan, and you bring guilt into your conscience and distress into your soul. But obey him by believing in his name, walking in his fear, keeping his word, listening to his voice, doing his will, and desiring to glorify him in your body and spirit which are his, and you will find more or less peace in believing and the approbation of God in your conscience. Sin may be sweet in appearance, the snare be hidden from your view, and Satan may present the poison cup, the edge well smeared with honey. We may even long to have a sip, and sometimes are weak enough to taste some drops of the poisoned cup. But O the guilt, the misery, the darkness, the distress, and the perplexity which you will bring upon your soul if you put to your lips and drink any measure of that poison cup of sin which Satan presents to your imagination as a delicious draught. Thus you see there is a blessedness in obedience. It does not give us, but it manifests our interest in the finished work of the Son of God. There is nothing in the highest acts of faith and obedience that we can take any joy in as accomplished by us, nothing that we can boast of as our own; and yet there is a sacred blessedness in obeying the gospel by believing in the Son of God, by walking in the fear of God, and doing the things as well as professing them which are pleasing in God's sight. At any rate, I can say this, if I can say no more, if you want to be miserable; if you want to walk in a path of bondage,

distress, and perplexity; if you want to plant a thorn in a dying pillow; if you want to have God at a distance when you most need him near, and when you come to a trial to have no support in it nor under it; walk disobediently, walk inconsistently, and you will get your wish to the very full. Walk in carnality, pride, and self-righteousness; live after worldly customs and conform yourself to worldly opinions, and if there be a grain of godly fear, or one spark of the life of God in your heart, you will do the best thing you can to bring your soul into misery and bondage. Therefore, though we can take no merit from and make no boasting of any obedience we may render, yet is the path of godly obedience so safe, so blessed, so honouring to God, and so comforting to the soul thus favoured, that it should be and will be the desire of all who truly fear God to be ever found walking in it. And O the blessedness, if we are enabled in any measure to obey the will of God by believing in his dear Son and by walking in his fear, to find under every temptation and trial in life, death, health, and sickness. that we have a gracious and sympathising High Priest, "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."