

## **DELIVERANCE FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, October 13, 1861

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."

Galatians 1:4, 5

What an amount of sorrow and misery beyond all calculation, and indeed beyond all conception, there is in this wretched world, this vale of tears, as it is so often justly called, in which our present earthly lot is cast! Not a house, not a family, not a heart is there which does not sooner or later taste more or less deeply of this most bitter cup. How many, for instance, this morning have risen from their lowly beds, or rather their miserable floors, sunk into such poverty that they scarcely know where to get a morsel of bread to eat, or the poorest, meanest raiment to put on! How many, if not sunk into the same depths of absolute want, yet, like a drowning man in a deep and rapid stream, can scarcely keep their head above water in their daily struggle for the means of existence! How many are now mourning over family bereavements, the delight of their eyes being taken from them at a stroke, or by lingering illness! How many youthful hearts, just in the first opening dawn of life, are bleeding under the deepest wounds inflicted upon their tenderest and warmest affections! How many are lying upon their beds of pain and languishing, and some at this very moment struggling and gasping in the agonies of death, and leaving this world without hope!

Thus, as we cast our eyes around us, or frame in our own minds a faint conception of the sorrows heaped upon the

sons of men, we may almost say of this wretched world, that it is like Egypt when the angel passed through the land and smote the first-born. "There was a great cry in the land, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead." (Ex. 12:30.) Or like the inhabitants of Ekron, when God smote them for their sins, and "the cry of the city went up to heaven" (1 Sam. 15:12.) Or like Ezekiel's roll, which was "written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mournings, and woe." (Ezek. 2:10.)

But there is something still worse behind. Is there not a cause for all this sorrow and misery? Does God afflict willingly the sons of men? Would there be such an amount of human wretchedness, unless there had been some provocation on the part of man, to bring down all these chastisements upon his guilty head? There is something then in this world, and something too in the heart of man worse than sorrow. There is sin. When we look at the stream of misery which runs down this wretched world and examine it a little more closely, we see that it is not a stream of pure un-mingled sorrow. It is rather a sewer of corruption than a flowing river of unmixed grief, for ever and anon out of this sewer of corruption, there surge to the top such sad exhibitions of human wickedness and crime, as must appall the mind which is not altogether deadened to every moral and religious feeling.

Look, for instance, at the crimes of the present day. What murders, suicides, deeds of violence, robberies, and hideous acts of uncleanness continually come to light; and how these in some instances, almost accidental discoveries, show what depth of corruption is really working and festering in the heart of man. As the leprosy which broke forth upon the forehead of King Uzziah only revealed the disease itself that had taken possession of his body (2 Chron. 26:19) so these

open crimes that come from time to time to light, are merely marks and tokens of the deep-seated leprosy, that works underneath in the fabric of society as well as in the corrupt nature of man.

But in what a desperate, what a deplorable state should we be if there were no remedy for this misery and wretchedness, which has disjuncted earth, and, like a mighty earthquake passing over it, made all its foundations out of course. (Ps. 82:5.) What less than a present hell would it be if there were nothing in this world but sin and sorrow; if we had just for a few short weeks, or months, or years, to drain deep the cup of affliction, to be immersed in the floods of sin, to go down mourning to our grave, and then to open our eyes in endless misery! But O look up, ye mourning saints, who are often bowed down with worldly grief and sorrow, and much more frequently and much more heavily by the deep corruptions of your heart, look up and see that ray of heavenly light which even now seems to shine across this black gloom, this dense darkness, as a beam of sun sometimes in a moment lights up the face of the earth. "Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78, 79.)

Can you not hear, as it were a voice from God that speaks to the guilty sons of men, even such a voice as the shepherds heard when the heavenly choir sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men?" Can you not see how mercy appears coming forth, as from the bosom of God, with angel form? How she speaks as with an angel voice to the sons of men, and tells them that there is a balm for all their woes, a cure for all their diseases'? Can you not see a hand which, points to the atoning blood and the justifying obedience of the Son of God, and says, "This is the

remedy, the only remedy, which God has provided for all the sin and sorrow which are in the world." Were it not so why need I preach? Why need you hear? If there were no mercy for the sinner; if there were no cure for the sick; if there were no salvation for the lost; if there were no door of hope for the despairing, why need I this morning stand before you, and why need you sit to hear what I may speak in the Lord's name? Our text opens up very sweetly and blessedly the remedy which God has provided for all this misery, the healing balm which he has brought to light in the sufferings, blood-shedding, and death of his dear Son as the way of pardon and peace to all who deeply and spiritually feel themselves to be poor, sinful, guilty transgressors.

The apostle in the verse immediately preceding our text, breathes forth his desire for the benefit and blessing of the Churches of Galatia, in his usual prayerful, yet tender and affectionate salutation. "Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." And then, as if the very mention of grace and peace touched his heart as with holy fire, and opened his mouth to set forth salvation by atoning blood of the Lamb, he breaks forth in the words of our text, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."

Let us, with God's blessing, approach these words; let us come near to this stream that breaks forth in the desert, and see whether we can, with God's help, draw some living water from this well of salvation, which may refresh our spirit, cheer our mind, and comfort our heart. In attempting to do this. I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.— **First**, show you how and why this is **an evil world**.

II.— **Secondly**, how our blessed Lord **gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us** from it.

III.— **Thirdly**, that this was **in accordance with the will of God and our Father**.

IV.— **Fourthly**, that this will produce an eternal **revenue, of praise: "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."**

I.—The present is an "**evil world:**" that is God's testimony of it. You may say, "It is a beautiful world, a glorious world; and I mean as long as I live to enjoy all the happiness which I can possibly get out of it. It is all cant and nonsense to talk about it being such a miserable world. It is true there may be some unhappiness in it; but that is man's own fault. Did not God make it a beautiful world, and can we think that he meant it to be an unhappy one, or that we should be poor unhappy creatures in it?" Such is the language of many a heart, the utterance of many a lip. But whose testimony will stand, God's or man's?

If God has pronounced this to be an "evil world," not all man's vain reasonings, not all man's plausible speeches will alter God's testimony. Man may call evil good, and good evil; man may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; man may call darkness light, and light darkness. But man's testimony does not alter God's reality. If the mouth of God has declared the present world to be "evil," not all the lies of Satan nor all the plausibility of man put together can ever make it to be good.

But what is the **world!** What does the Holy Spirit mean by the expression, which so often occurs in the New Testament? Does he mean the **material** world, that wide and spacious

earth which we see with our bodily eyes, and upon which our feet tread? Does he mean the mountains and valleys, rivers and brooks, meadows and fields, wooded hills and smiling landscapes, all which proclaim with loud voice their great and bountiful Creator? No. In a sense, it is true, earth literally, materially partakes of the curse of the Fall; for on the day when man fell God cursed the ground for man's sake, and in sorrow he was to eat of it all the days of his life. Thorns and thistles was it to bring forth unto him, and in the sweat of his face was he to eat bread, till he returned unto the ground out of which he was taken. **Ge 3:17,18**

But "the world" here does not mean the material, literal world daily spread before our eyes, but the men and women who dwell in it; for the material world, though it does partake of the curse of the Fall, is not in itself evil, that is, not sinful as the heart of man is who dwells upon it. It is perfectly true that the sin of man has corrupted every spot where it has fallen and carried misery in its train, so that in a sense "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" under the burdens which the sin of man has laid upon it. But the term "world," as used by the Holy Spirit in the word of truth, signifies not so much material creation, though it may in a measure embrace that meaning, as the men and women who are inhabitants of it, and especially as distinguished in the mind of God from his own chosen family.

But was man always evil? Did not God create him in his own image, after his own likeness? And when he had thus created him, did he not look down from heaven upon the work of his hands as with holy approbation and pronounce that it was "very good?" Evil, then, though man may be, he did not come evil from the hands of his Maker. It was not possible that a good God could create an evil man, and that a pure Jehovah could create an impure being. Job asks the pregnant

question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" But may we not reverse the inquiry, and say, "Who can bring an unclean thing out of a clean?" No; an enemy hath done this. It was with the Fall, as we read in the parable of the tares in the field. The sower sowed wheat; but whence came the tares? Not from him who sowed the wheat; but "while men slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way." (Matt. 13:25.) Satan was the enemy who sowed tares in the wheat field; and Satan it was that sowed sin in the heart of man; for he was permitted, in God's wise, unerring providence, to deceive the woman; she was permitted to entangle the man and draw him into her transgression; and thus "by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that, or in whom [margin] all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.) That is the source of all the evil which, is now, or ever has been in the world, for that one sin introduced every other sin with it. It brought in its train every iniquity that ever has been conceived by the imagination, uttered by the lips, or perpetrated by the hands of man.

Thus as the acorn contains in its tiny shell the whole oak with all its branching foliage; so that one sin conceived in the mind of our first parent contained in itself all those branches of sin which have covered the world with their lurid shadow, as the oak spreads its shade over the grass beneath. Every faculty of man fell in the fall from its primitive purity and strength. It was as though in the midst of a bright day the sun had in a moment gone down and darkness fell upon the scene; it was as if an earthquake had rent the solid foundations of the earth; or as if a mighty volcano had suddenly opened its mouth in the soil to pour forth clouds of sulphurous smoke and streams of boiling lava. In a moment, as if by a sudden shock, man's whole nature underwent a change, stricken down by sin as by palsy or leprosy. His

understanding became darkened, his judgment corrupted, his conscience deadened, his affections alienated, and all that warm current of purity and innocency which once flowed in a clear stream towards God, became thickened and fouled with the sin that was poured into it from the mouth of Satan, and was thus diverted from its course of light, love, and life to run into a channel of darkness, enmity, and death. Thus the fountain was corrupted at its very source, and from this spring-head have all the streams of evil flowed which have made the world a very Aceldama, a field of blood.

This is the fountain whence have issued all that misery and wretchedness which in all ages and in all climates have pursued man from the cradle to the grave; which have wrung millions of hot tears from human eyes; which have broken, literally broken, thousands of human hearts; which have desolated home after home, and struck grief and sadness into countless breasts. But. Oh! this fountain of sin in the heart of man has done worse than this; it has peopled hell; it has swept and is still sweeping thousands and tens of thousands into eternal perdition. Let us, then, not be juggled into a vain persuasion by the prince and god of this world that it is either a good or a happy world. This is a part of his witching wiles whereby he deceives the hearts of men by vain shows. He must not speak ill of his own principality or of his own dominion, though, like himself, it is full of darkness and despair. Let us not believe Satan's lies but God's truth; and this we certainly shall do if we have the teaching and testimony of God himself in our consciences.

Let this, then, be firmly settled in your heart and mine by the testimony of God in the word, and by the corresponding witness of the Spirit in our breast, that is an "evil world." The world, however large, is but an aggregate of human hearts,—for as in water face answers to face so the heart of man to



man; and as my heart is but a copy of your heart, and your heart but a copy of every other man's heart, we carry in our own bosom, if our eyes are enlightened to see what really and truly takes place there, a conviction that it is an evil world, because we find the evil of the world alive and rife in our own breast. But we shall see more of this when we come to show how Jesus gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world. I shall therefore pass on to our second point,

II.—Which consists of two branches:

I. **First, the giving** of himself for our sins;

2. **The object and purpose** for which the Lord thus gave himself, **that he might deliver us from this present evil world.**

1. There is something to my mind inexpressibly sweet and precious in the expression, "**gave himself.**" We find the same words used of our blessed Lord elsewhere in Scripture, as, for instance, where it is said that "Christ loved the Church and **gave** himself for it" (Eph. 5:25); and where the apostle speaking of his living a life of faith on the Son of God adds, "who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) So also when the apostle has bidden us to be "followers of God as dear children and walk in love," he adds this prevailing motive, "As Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us." (Eph. 5:2.)

1. But in opening up this heavenly mystery, it will be desirable to cast a glance beyond this time-state, and to direct our contemplation to what Jesus was **before** he voluntarily gave himself for our sins; for if we would spiritually and experimentally enter into this solemn mystery,

we must have a view by faith of what he was in the courts of bliss **before** he thus gave himself. A spiritual contemplation of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, will prepare our mind to see a little of the breadth and length and depth and height and to know something of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge; for love was the moving cause of his giving himself, and therefore dwelt in his bosom before he thus freely surrendered himself to sufferings and death.

We must, therefore, view him as a Person in the glorious Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost; for "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." We must, then, with God's help and blessing, raise up believing eyes and believing hearts to view him as one with the Father in nature and essence, as the second Person in that glorious Trinity in which there are three Persons and but one God. We must also by the eyes of faith view him as the Son of the Father in truth and love, his own true, his own proper, his own eternal Son. We must look at him as lying in the Father's bosom from all eternity, as ever his delight and rejoicing always before him. And we must endeavour, as far as the Lord may enable, to look with believing eyes at the love of the Father toward the Son and the love of the Son toward the Father, and so raise up in our souls some contemplation of the intimate and yet ineffable fellowship and union, enjoyed between the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost in the glorious courts above before time existed or creation was known. It is true, most true, that we cannot comprehend these heavenly mysteries, though they are the food of living faith; nor indeed can we raise up our thoughts to their spiritual contemplation; and yet unless we have some gracious knowledge of them and some living faith in them we

shall not be able to enter into the heavenly mystery of the love of Christ.

Unless we see by the eye of faith something of the glory which, the Son of God had with the Father before the foundation of the world, how can we enter into the solemn mystery of his giving himself to suffer, bleed, and die? Our Lord, therefore, speaking of his disciples, said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:22) that is, the knowledge and enjoyment of it. So John speaks of those "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God: And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:13, 14.) Does not also the apostle give this as a mark of regenerating grace? "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.)

We must, then, see his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, before we can see his humiliation in condescending to be for us a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The height of his glory shows us the depth of his condescension. To view what he was in the courts of bliss prepares us to see what he was when he hung upon the cross. This is all the difference between the eye of faith and the eye of sense. The eye of sense merely saw him hanging in shame and agony between two thieves; but the eye of faith sees him as the beloved Son of God bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.

But it may be asked, "**When** did the Son of God first give himself for our sins? You have told us that it was in eternity before time was. But was sin then known?" No, for creation was then unknown also. But the Church was loved in the mind of God from all eternity, for he himself declares, "Yea, I

have loved thee with an everlasting love." (Jer. 31:3.) As, then, all things lay naked and open before the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah, the sin and misery into which she could sink were foreseen and provided for; and thus we may say that the Son of God gave himself for our sins in eternity, in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.

It seems from the testimony of Holy Writ, that there was a solemn council held in heaven between the Three Persons of the sacred Godhead; for we read of "the counsel of peace being between them both"—that is, the Father and the Son. (Zech. 6:13.) We also read, "Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty;" and that this was the result of a covenant seems plain from the words in the same Psalm. "My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." (Ps. 89:19-34.) This council, it appears, was how the Church, sunk into sin and therefore justly amenable to divine wrath, could be saved in strict accordance with the justice and purity of God. This was the mystery to be solved; this was the enigma which, no finite intellect could unravel.

To devise a plan so as to reconcile every attribute of God in full harmony with the salvation of man; to determine a method how justice and mercy could meet together; how peace and righteousness could kiss each other; how justice could obtain its fullest demands, and yet mercy descend to embrace with its loving arms the guilty sons of men, was indeed a task beyond the utmost faculties of the brightest seraph or the highest archangel. The plan of salvation, therefore, is always represented in the Scripture not only as the greatest display of God's love, but also as the deepest manifestation of his wisdom. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." (Rom. 11:33.) "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden

wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." (1 Cor. 2:7.) This enigma, then, was solved by the coming forward of the Son of God in the eternal covenant to give himself for our sins. In those solemn councils of heaven he freely offered himself to suffer, bleed, and die for guilty man's sake. But this he could only do by himself becoming man, and by taking the flesh and blood of the children and offering up that pure and holy humanity which he should take in the womb of the Virgin, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

He could thus obey the rigorous demands of God's inflexible justice, endure, and by enduring remove the curse of the law, and thus work out and bring in a perfect and complete righteousness in which his people might stand justified before the throne of God. Thus could he save his people in the strictest conformity to the justice of God, and harmonise every jarring attribute of Deity. In this sense he gave himself for our sins before time itself had birth. He is, therefore, said to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and even then to have had "a book of life," in which the names of his chosen people were written. (Rev. 13:8.)

2. But we may now look at the **carrying out** of this eternal plan of redeeming love, and view how in pursuance of his giving himself in the eternal covenant, when the time came—God's appointed time—he gave himself for our sins by assuming flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary. There is an expression in the Book of Common Prayer, I think in the **Te Deum**, which I have often much admired: "When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb." There is to my mind great beauty in the idea that he did not abhor the womb of the virgin; for who was it that lay there but the eternal Son of God. What a conspicuous view it gives of his infinite grace and

unspeakable mercy that he could assume our nature into union with his own divine Person in the womb of the virgin!

In this voluntary surrender of himself to endure all the miseries and sorrows of his life here below, we see the greatness of the Lord's love; for "he bare our griefs and carried our sorrows" as well as our iniquities. (Isai. 53:4, 11.) Thus, as giving himself for our sins, he bore them from the manger to the cross. When, then, by the eye of faith we see him going about doing good; when we hear the gracious words which ever dropped from his lips: when we see the mighty miracles wrought by his hands, we still view him as our sin and burden bearer.

3. But it is especially in the last scenes of his suffering life that we see him freely **giving himself for our sins**. When, then we follow him into the gloomy garden, where, under the overwhelming pressure of sin and sorrow, he sweat great drops of blood; thence to the Jewish council and Pilate's judgment-hall; and thence to the cross of Calvary where, as the height of indignity, he was crucified between two thieves; in these last scenes of his suffering life and obedient death, we see more especially what the blessed Lord endured when he gave himself up to be made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. For in giving himself for our sins, he took upon himself all their guilt, their penalty, and their punishment. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree as if they had been his own; for having voluntarily put himself into the sinner's place, he stood as the Surety, from whom justice exacted the utmost mite.

Thus, not only did he endure the contradictions of sinners against himself, but what was far harder to bear, he suffered under the intolerable wrath of God, when his Father hid his face from him, when anguish drank up his spirit, and when

as made a curse for us, he hung between heaven and earth as a spectacle for men and angels. God the Father accepted this substitution, for it was according to his own eternal will and good purpose that the Son of his love should thus give himself for our sins, that he might put all their guilt and condemnation away, cast them behind God's back, wash them out in the fountain of his atoning blood, and blot them out for ever as a cloud from the face of the heavens. Where should we be, what should we be, what hope could we have of escaping the wrath to come except for this blessed fact. this solemn, divine reality, that the Son of God gave himself for our sins, and thus for ever put them away?

But could this stupendous miracle of mercy and grace have been accomplished but by the Lord's free and voluntary gift of himself? Who could have brought him from heaven? Who could have asked him to come down? What angel or seraph could have whispered the word on high. "Let the Son of God give himself for guilty man?" What human heart could have conceived such a thought, or what human tongue, if such a thought had been conceived, could have breathed the word up to the courts of bliss, "Let the Son of God come down and bleed for us vile polluted sinners?" What! that God's co-equal, co-eternal Son, the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person; that he in whom the Father eternally delighted; he who was worshipped and adored by myriads of angels,—that he should leave this glory, come down to earth, be treated as the vilest malefactor, have nails driven through his hands and feet, and expire on the cross in ignominy and shame! Could such a thought have entered angelic or human breasts?

And yet this was the eternal thought of God; this was the sovereign purpose of the Triune Jehovah; and to accomplish this glorious plan of eternal wisdom and love, the Son of God

freely gave himself for our sins. There is a sweet figure of this voluntary gift of himself in the burnt offering spoken of in the first chapter of Leviticus. This sacrifice was entirely voluntary on the part of the offerer, and as such was wholly burnt upon the altar. So our blessed Lord came of his own accord; it was his free, voluntary act; and thus as the burnt offering was wholly consumed in the flames of the altar, no one part being reserved, so our blessed Lord was wholly consumed in the flames of God's wrath and consumed also in the flames of his own self-sacrificing love. "He gave himself for our sins."

Have you ever seen your sins? Look at the words: how expressive they are! Did you ever have a sight of your sins? Were they ever laid as a load of guilt upon your conscience? Did you ever see their blackness, their enormity, their aggravated nature, their innumerable multitude, and how every one of them deserved an everlasting hell? Did the wrath of God ever fall into your conscience on account of your sins? Did his anger ever drink up your spirit? Was his hand ever heavy upon you night and day, so that your moisture was turned into the drought of summer? Did the curse of the law ever sound in your conscience? Did your iniquities ever appear more in number than the hairs of your head, so that you almost sank into despair under the apprehended wrath of God?

If the Lord has ever wrought anything of this experience with power in your conscience, you will see and feel too something of what it is for Christ to have given himself for your sins, those abominable sins of yours, those black and horrible crimes that have so grieved your conscience, so distressed your soul and made you often fear lest hell should be your everlasting abode. Now until a man has realized something of the guilt of his vile and abominable sins, and



they have been laid as a heavy weight upon his heart and a burden upon his conscience, he cannot enter into the solemn mystery of the Son of God giving himself for them. He does not know what sin is; it has not been opened up to him in its real character and awful magnitude; its guilt and filth and bitterness have not been discovered to him by the teaching of the blessed Spirit. He therefore knows little or nothing of the solemn mystery of dying love and atoning blood. He cannot fully and clearly justify God in the gift of his Son, nor can he properly appreciate the love of Christ in coming into such extreme circumstances of shame and suffering that he might bear his sins, and put them away by his atoning blood.

We must, therefore, know something of the guilt and filth of sin in our own conscience, something of its weight and burden, that we may appreciate the solemn mystery, as well as spiritually and experimentally enter into the sweet and sacred blessedness of that heavenly truth that the Son of God freely gave himself for our sins. And when we look not only at our own, but at the innumerable sins which God's people have committed in all ages and in all places, and see that Jesus must have borne them all in his own body on the tree, under all this intolerable load of guilt must not the holy Lamb of God have sunk utterly crushed, broken and overwhelmed by the wrath of God, the demands of Justice, and the curse of the Law, unless he had been supported by indwelling Deity; unless he had been upheld by the mighty power of God; unless he had been sustained and strengthened by the eternal Spirit, through whom he offered himself without spot unto God?

2. But to pass on to the object for which our gracious Lord gave himself: **"that he might deliver us from this present evil world."** We live in an evil world, and sooner or later every child of God will by deep and painful experience

learn the truth of God's testimony concerning it. Its evil character may be glossed over by plausible speeches; the prince and god of this world may by his magic incantations cast a veil over its foul and ugly features, or transform this worn-out and withered beldame into a pure and innocent maiden in all the charming flush of youth and beauty. But though a veil may conceal deformity, it cannot remove it. Paint and rouge cannot make an old cheek young. The thin sheet spread over a corpse may hide the ghastly face, shrunken features, and stiffened limbs, but it does not turn it into a living man. The plaster over an ulcer may hide the gory matter from view, but it does not make it sound flesh. So Satan by his enchantments may cast a veil over the real character of this evil world, and may hide out of view the deep ulcers which are eating into the very core of man's corrupt nature; but sooner or later they are discovered by a seeing eye and a believing heart under the light, life, and power of the blessed Spirit, and the real state of the case is opened up to a tender conscience.

But the Lord gave himself for our sins that he might **deliver** us from this present evil world. It would little benefit us to see and feel the malady were there provided no efficacious remedy. Many a dying man feels his mortal disease; but he knows to his sorrow, that a sense of illness can no more cure him, than it can turn pain into ease or sickness into health. **Deliverance**, deliverance is that which is wanted. Let us see, then, what the blessed Lord came to deliver us from when he gave himself for our sins.

1. First, he gave himself to deliver us from the **condemnation** of this present evil world. Men are not willing to believe the solemn fact that this world lies under a sentence of condemnation from the wrath of God. But such is the Scripture testimony. "We know that we are of God," says

John, "and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19); and if "in wickedness," in condemnation, unless we think that God justifies wickedness.

Paul, therefore, speaking of divine chastisement says, "For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1Co 11:32.) But does not this testimony expressly declare that the world lies under condemnation? If, then, you and I are found at the last great day in the world, we shall be found under the condemnation of the world. When the deluge came, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened, every one who was in the world was drowned by the flood; none were saved but those who were in the ark. When God burnt up the cities of the plain, all the men, women, and children that were found in them were destroyed by the brimstone and fire, which the Lord rained out of heaven. At the last siege of Jerusalem, when Titus destroyed that city, all found within its walls were put to the sword, burnt in the fire, which destroyed the city and the temple, or dragged into captivity.

Now so it will be with you if you are found at death to be one with and in the world; you will be condemned with it, as being found in it and of it, as were those who were drowned in the flood, burnt up in Sodom, and slaughtered in Jerusalem. If you are found on a dying bed in the world, what can you expect but that the same sentence of condemnation will fall upon you in the day of judgment, as that which will be pronounced upon the world by the Judge of the quick and dead? O, the unspeakable mercy of being delivered from that condemnation by a living faith in his blood, who gave himself for our sins that he might save us from the wrath to come!

2. But there is something more than the condemnation of the world from which Christ came to deliver us by giving himself for our sins. There are the **people** of the world, the men and the women by whom we are surrounded and with whom we are so closely connected in the daily transactions of life. Mixture with them, to a certain extent, is unavoidable, as the demands of business indispensably require it. But there is a limit beyond which we must not go. We must not make the men and women of this world our friends and companions.

If I am found amongst transgressors, walking with them as my chosen friends and intimates, I shall have to endure the same punishment that falls upon them; for "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Pr 13:20.) We often see this literally and naturally fulfilled. A companion of drunkards often kills himself with strong drink. A companion of thieves, as approving of their deeds, and connected with them in their employment, if he himself is not actually a pick-pocket, yet is liable to be imprisoned as a vagabond. Why is he in such company—why is he aiding them in their nefarious pursuits if he is not an accomplice? Just so it will be with us if we are found in life and death friends and associates with the world: we shall be shut up in hell with those who are actually guilty of the crimes perpetrated in the world, even though we ourselves have not sinned as they have. As our company is, so will be our judgment. If we walk in the counsel of the ungodly and stand in the way of sinners, we shall be judged with them; if on the other hand, from love to the Lord and to his people, we keep company with **them**, we shall have a share in their blessings.

Let us never forget that the Lord Jesus Christ came to deliver us from all company with his enemies, and to bring us into union with himself and his friends. Indeed I believe that one

of the first marks of the grace of God in the soul, is the separation which it produces between us and those who have hitherto been our chief friends and associates. The work of God upon the heart is decisive work. It tolerates no half measures; it allows no compromise. It creates, from the very first, a gulf between the world and us that we never want to bridge over, never wish to be filled up, but are only desirous that the gulf should be daily wider and wider, and the separation greater and greater. I hope I can truly say, for my part, that I neither have nor wish to have one worldly friend or associate. May I ever be separate from all such, and may I live and die in the sweet and sole fellowship of the saints of God.

3. But there is a deliverance also **from the customs and maxims of** the world. And Christ gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the power and prevalence of these maxims and customs, for they are altogether evil. What are they but the advancement of self? "Let me rise, whoever sinks"—is not this the world's motto? As in a crowded place when there is a sudden alarm of fire and men are struggling for life, the strong will trample down the weak to save themselves: so in the grand struggle of life, the spirit of the world is to trample down all and any that may stand in its way in order to advance itself. "Self! Self! Self!" is the world's battle cry. "Let **me** swim, I care not who sinks. Let **me** rise, I care not who falls. Let **me** get safe to shore, and those who cannot swim, let the tide sweep them away; it will be all the better for **me**." Men may not be so daring as to utter these expressions but they embody the secret thoughts of every worldly heart.

Now to deliver us from such ungodly maxims and such selfish ways, Christ gave himself; for in giving himself for our sins, the purpose of his heart was not merely to save but also to

sanctify. He came to deliver us from the world within as well as the world without, that through his dying love and atoning blood, a new heart and a new spirit might be communicated to us, so that we might not be ever seeking the advancement of self, might not be ever bent upon gratifying our pride, ambition, and covetousness; but that the profit of our soul should be to us of far deeper importance than the profit of our bodies, the prosperity of our circumstances or the advancement of our families; that we should hate and abhor that spirit of selfishness which is the very life blood of a worldly heart; that the salvation and sanctification of our soul, should be our first concern; and next to that, as far as we can, to do good to the bodies and souls of our fellow-men.

4. Our Lord, therefore, gave himself for our sins that he might also deliver us from the **spirit** of the world. And where is that spirit? In our own bosom we need not dread the company and maxims of the world without, if we had not so much of the spirit of the world within. It is because we carry so much combustible material in our bosom, that we are justly afraid of fire. If I could live in a fire-proof house, I need not fear my neighbour's house being in flames; but if mine be a thatched cottage I may well tremble when the flame draws near my habitation. So it is in grace. If I were perfectly holy, had no evil heart, knew nothing of sin in the flesh, I need not dread contact with the world. But because I carry in my bosom that world within which is but the counterpart and image of the world without, I need dread the influence, and as it were the very breath of the world upon me: for the spirit of the world, if it once catch my thoughts and affections, may soon set on fire every evil in my heart.

But our blessed Lord gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the spirit of the world by giving us a new

spirit, making us partakers of a divine nature whereby we escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust. We should ever bear in mind that our blessed Lord in giving himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the present evil world, did something more than merely rescue us from death and hell, or merely save us from the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. Salvation from the wrath to come is something more than a mere escape from hell. This might have been done, and yet had nothing else been accomplished grace would have fallen very far short of our deep necessities.

But Jesus died and rose again that he might bring us near to his own bosom, conform us to his own image, make us partakers of his own grace, give us to drink of and into his own Spirit, that we might receive those communications out of his own fulness which will make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It was God's eternal purpose that the spouse and bride of his dear Son should not only be rescued from all the sins and miseries of the Adam fall, but should be exalted far beyond what she was in her primeval creation. She is to shine forth one day in the eternal glory of his own dear Son, as he said in his intercessory prayer for his disciples, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them that they may be one even as we are one." (John 17:22.) This glory is twofold—present and future. The present glory is to be conformed to his suffering image, and by beholding him to be changed into it by the power of the Spirit, as the Apostle speaks, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2Co 3:18.) Future glory is to be perfectly conformed to his present glorified image in body and soul.

But as we shall only be glorified with him hereafter if we suffer with him here, so there must be an inward conformity to his suffering image upon earth, that there may be a perfect conformity to his glorified image in heaven. Calvary then is the source whence these healing streams flow; for Jesus is of God made unto us "sanctification" as well as "righteousness and redemption." The king's daughter is "all glorious within" as well as without in "her clothing of wrought gold" (Ps 45:13). The inward glory consists in the transforming efficacy of the blessed Spirit in the heart, through which, being delivered from conformity to this world, we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

III.—But now comes our next point, which is to show that the whole of this work of Christ upon the cross, whereby he gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, is **"according to the will of our God and our Father."** It is a blessed contemplation of a believing heart to see and feel how the whole work of Christ, in saving and sanctifying his redeemed people, harmonises with the eternal and sovereign will of God; for this foundation truth is deeply engraven upon every regenerate heart, that nothing can take place in heaven or earth but what is in accordance with the sovereign will of Jehovah. He is the supreme arbiter of all events, and doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

It is sweet, then, to see by faith that the Son of God giving himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, was in full accordance with the will of God. The will of the Father and the will of the Son must be one; but it is sweet to see that he against whom and before whom we



have sinned, should be so well pleased with the sacrifice which Jesus has offered for our sins, and that all this was settled in eternal covenant. It mightily strengthens faith, hope, and love to be graciously persuaded that our Lord did not, so to speak, drag the pardon of our sins out of God's bosom; did not prevail with his heavenly Father by tears and supplications to let him come down from heaven to save guilty man, but that in this wondrous scheme of redeeming love, as in everything else, the will of the Father and of the Son were one.

To think that Jesus wrung the gift of eternal life out of God's unwilling breast would be to introduce contradiction into the courts of bliss, to make a schism between the Father and the Son, and to overthrow the whole fabric of the covenant of grace. It was the Father's good pleasure, it was the Son's good pleasure, it was the Holy Spirit's good pleasure; for these three, though distinct in Person, are one in essence. What pleased the Father, well pleased the Son, and what pleased the Son well pleased the Spirit; so that the whole of this wondrous scheme of salvation was in harmony with the will and purpose of God and our Father as our Father in Christ. "The gift of God is eternal life," and though this is "through Jesus Christ our Lord," that is, through the suffering, bloodshedding, and death of Jesus, this very channel through which it comes only enhances the greatness of the gift. A view of this by faith opens a door in the valley of Achor for every poor, desponding child of God; and, as viewed by faith, discovers a most suitable and blessed way of access to God himself.

You feel yourself to be a poor, vile, miserable sinner, you see yourself surrounded with evil within and without, as having your lot cast in an evil world; you long for an escape from all wrath and fear, doubt, terror, and torment; but you lift up

your eyes and scarcely know where to look; you stretch forth your hands and scarcely know whom to grasp; you move forward, but scarcely know where to direct your steps. Now look up once more and see whether you cannot see a light from heaven that even now shines upon your mind. Listen with outstretched ears if you cannot hear a voice from heaven itself that even now speaks to your heart. And what does that voice say? "The Son of God gave himself for your sins, that he might deliver you from this present evil world; and this is according to the will of God and our Father." Here, then, is a guiding light that shines upon the pilgrim's path; here is a directing voice that leads his footsteps into the ways of peace and truth. It is true that we must not expect to see an actual light or hear a real voice; but we see light in God's light when we believe, and we hear his voice when faith is mixed with his word.

When, then, as led by the blessed Spirit, we go to the blessed Redeemer that he may deliver us from this present evil world, by the application of his blood and the communication of his love, we go to him thus in accordance with the will of God and our Father. This is our heavenly warrant. If we believe in his name, it is in accordance with the will of God and our Father. If we hope in his mercy, if we love him with a pure heart fervently, if we cast our soul upon him, if, distrusting our own strength and righteousness we hang entirely upon his, we are acting according to the will of God and our Father; we are complying with the dictates of sovereign wisdom, listening to the voice of sovereign mercy, and walking in the ways of eternal truth and peace.

Thus, that the whole work of Christ with all its blessed fruits and effects, should be "according to the will of God and our Father," casts a blessed and glorious light upon the original gift of the Son by the Father. The whole is thus seen to be

one grand, glorious, and complete scheme of eternal wisdom and love. As thus enlightened by the blessed Spirit and renewed in the spirit of our mind, we see that God has designed and executed a way whereby we may be delivered from this present evil world.

Is it to you an evil world? Do you "sigh and cry" like those spoken of in Ezekiel (Eze 9:4), "for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" not only in the evil world without, but in the worse evil world within? There is a way of escape for you; there is a door of hope open in the very dome of heaven. Mercy whispers to you from the seat of heavenly bliss, "The Son of God gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God." When this message of mercy and truth is received into a believing heart, and the inmost spirit begins to soften and melt under the sweet sound of pardoning love, it will bring out of the heart and lip our fourth and last point which is,

IV.— **"To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."** Is he not worthy of all glory? O, what a glorious scheme to save guilty man as contrived in heaven and accomplished on earth! O, what a glorious plan of infinite wisdom to harmonise all the jarring perfections of Deity in the salvation of wretches so forlorn, of sinners so thoroughly lost! O, glorious contrivance, that mercy and truth should meet together in a suffering Immanuel, that peace and righteousness should kiss each other over Calvary's cross; that God should be just and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; and all this that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord; that sin might be pardoned and the sinner go free, and yet God's justice not be tarnished, but rather shine forth with redoubled lustre. Is not then a triune Jehovah worthy of all the

glory that myriads of saved sinners can render to his holy name?

Can that heart ever have tasted of his grace—can that soul ever have seen his glory, that withholds this triumphant note and denying him the glory due to his name, says, "Glory to myself; glory to my own wisdom, my own righteousness and my own exertions?" Is that a note to be heard in heaven? Will self-righteousness ever chant its discordant sounds in the heavenly choir? No; as in the temple, when "the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord" (2Ch 5:13), so will it be in the courts of bliss when ransomed souls assemble round the throne and cry, "Glory, glory, glory, for ever and ever, to Father, Son and Holy Ghost;" and heaven's vaults will re-echo with the universal cry "Amen."