

## Evidences Sealed and Open

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"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days."  
Jeremiah 32:14

As it will be my aim and object, with God's help and blessing, to lay before you this morning the spiritual meaning of these words, I must first call your attention to their literal and historical connection and signification; for these two modes of interpretation are always based upon, and coincide and harmonise with each other. A few scriptural instances will abundantly shew this. Thus, when our Lord gave a spiritual and experimental interpretation to the manna which fell from heaven, to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, to Jonah being three days and three nights in the whale's belly, we should find, upon examination, that all these spiritual explanations were based upon, and coincided with the literal signification of these Old Testament types. So when Paul spiritualises, as the term is, the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac,—the one as the seed of the bond woman, the other the child of promise; his two wives, Sarah and Hagar, as representing the two covenants; and the passage through the Red Sea as prefiguring spiritual baptism; in all these instances he bases the spiritual meaning upon the literal; so that the two harmonise and coincide with each other. So, also, when he applies to our Lord such passages as: "I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son," to prove his divine Sonship (Heb. 1:5); "I will put my trust in him," to shew his sacred humanity (Heb. 2:13); "He hath put

all things under his feet," to prove his present power and glory,—all these spiritual interpretations of passages in the Old Testament strictly coincide with their literal meaning and historical connection. We are not, therefore, at liberty to take any passage of the Old Testament, and what is called spiritualise it as our wisdom and fancy may suggest. Ignorant and presumptuous men have often taken deep and obscure passages of the Old Testament, and spiritualised them after their own fancy, to display their lofty wisdom or their profound knowledge of divine mysteries; and what has often been the result but to please shallow, light-minded professors, and make themselves justly, and the Scriptures unjustly, the laughingstock of fools? The Holy Ghost does not lead men into such wild vagaries; for God gives to his saints and servants by his grace not only "the Spirit of power, and of love *but of a sound mind*" (2 Tim. 1:7), which keeps them from carrying their carnal wisdom into his word of truth and turning that into a showplace for their real or fancied abilities.

I shall now, therefore, call your attention to the historical and literal connection of our text; for on that I hope to build a spiritual and experimental interpretation.

The words were spoken by Jeremiah to Baruch, in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, when the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem, and about a year before its final capture. He was at this time shut up in the court of the prison in the king of Judah's house; and the cause of his imprisonment was his faithfulness in prophesying to Zedekiah, that the Lord would give the city into the hand of the king of Babylon, that he should take it, and that the king himself should not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans, but surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, who should speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes

should behold his eyes. Now, when thus shut up in prison, the word of the Lord came unto him to forewarn him of a certain circumstance which was about to take place, that thus he might be assured that it was of the Lord, and be prepared to act accordingly. "Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is thine to buy it." Now, according to the Jewish law, if this land were sold to any casual purchaser, Jeremiah, as the next of kin, was at liberty, if not actually required, to redeem it, by paying the amount of its profits calculated to the year of jubilee, when it would return to the family. The Lord, therefore, apprised Jeremiah beforehand that his cousin, who was in possession of the land and who wished to sell the property, would come to him in the prison and bid him buy what we call the reversion, so as to prevent his having to redeem the land at another time from the purchaser. Now this was rather a subtle trick on the part of his first cousin, because the land at that time was perfectly valueless. It was in possession of the Chaldeans, Anathoth, where it was situated, being about three miles from Jerusalem; it, therefore, was of no value to any body, being devastated by the invading army; and thus Isaiah calls it, foreseeing, in the spirit of prophecy, its ruined state, "O poor Anathoth." (Isaiah 10:30.) But, besides this, Jeremiah knew well from prophecy that the land was to go into captivity for seventy years, and, therefore, that he would have to pay money down for what he never would enjoy. But God had a secret purpose in all this. He intended thereby, as I shall presently shew, to give a certain pledge that the land of Canaan which he had given to Abraham and his seed for a perpetual possession, though it might go into captivity for many years, should not be ever desolate, and thus his oath be broken and his promise made void.

According, therefore, to the forewarning word of the Lord to the prophet, Hanameel came to Jeremiah in the court of the prison, and said to him, "Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself." "Then," says the prophet, "I knew that this was the word of the Lord;" because it came to pass just as God had told him. What, then, does he do? "I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver"—not very much for a piece of land, about two guineas. But most probably it was but a small piece of land, a little garden or orchard in the suburbs of the city, which had come from some relative, for the land and houses within the walls of the priestly cities, of which Anathoth was one, were not to be sold, and therefore, were not redeemable. (Levit. 25:34.) Besides which, it was at the time perfectly valueless, and seventeen shekels of silver, which you may call, if you like, seventeen half-crowns, for that is about the value of the shekel, were quite enough to pay for it; especially as Jeremiah was to buy, not what is called the fee simple of the land, but the anticipated profits calculated according to the nearness of the jubilee. I have said before, that it was a deep trick in Hanameel, for most probably there was no real purchaser who wanted to buy the land, yet he made Jeremiah pay the same sum as if there were. But in this, as in other instances, God overruled the craft and covetousness of man to establish upon it his own counsels of grace and truth.

But though the land and the price were equally small, yet, as in similar cases with us, the law paid no regard to the size of the estate or the money payment, and, therefore, it could not be legally conveyed to Jeremiah without going through certain formalities; for the Jewish law was very strict upon

this point, not only because land was almost the only property then known, but because the whole was apportioned to the tribes in such a way that each family knew almost to a yard its own possession. We therefore read: "And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open." Now it would seem that what we call the title deeds of an estate, according to the Jewish law, were of two different kinds, one of these deeds being a sealed, and the other an open deed; and that they were both necessary to convey an estate or establish a title. If the sealed deed were not duly drawn up and properly sealed, or if it were wanting, the sale was invalid, and the title to the estate could not be established; and so, in a similar way, if the open deed were not duly signed or wanting, the sale and title were also invalid. To make, therefore, all secure, there was to be a sealed deed and an open deed; called here a "sealed evidence" and an "open evidence." Now when all these formalities had been observed, according to the law and custom, Jeremiah gave these evidences of the purchase unto Baruch in the sight of the vendor, Hanameel, and in the presence of the witnesses that had signed the writings, and before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison who had seen these deeds executed; and then he charged Baruch before them all, in the words of our text: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days." (Jer. 32:14.)

Having thus given you the historical connection and the literal signification of the passage before us, I shall now, with God's blessing, endeavour to open up its spiritual and

experimental meaning; and in so doing, I shall—

I.—*First*, attempt to explain and describe the *two kinds of evidence, sealed and open*, according to the words, "Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open."

II.—*Secondly*, the peculiar *place of deposit*, in which these evidences were to be lodged: "Put them in an earthen vessel."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *reason* why they were to be thus safely stored: "that they might continue many days."

I.—You will observe that these evidences were evidences of redemption, effected by means of actual purchase, and that without these evidences Jeremiah could not substantiate his claim to the land, were it ever called in question. If ever then a dispute should arise as to the lawful possession of the property, and he or his heirs should come forward and say, "This piece of ground is mine," the first question would be, on the part of his opponent, "Where are the deeds? Produce the writings; show your title to this estate." But if he had no writings to show, no title deeds to produce, he would be like a man who should offer an estate for sale at the Auction Mart, and when called upon to produce the writings to prove his title, had not a scrap of parchment to show. Now none but a knave or a fool could play such a part in the affairs of this life, however foolishly or deceitfully men may act in an analogous way as regards the life to come.

But as I said I would endeavour to show how the spiritual interpretation is based upon, and coincides with the literal, I shall now point out how what I have thus explained holds in grace. Redemption of land by a payment, under the Old

Testament, was a typical representation of the redemption of the Church by the blood of Christ. He is the true Goel, the next of kin, the one who has right to redeem. And he has redeemed his people by nothing less than his own blood-shedding and death, according to that song of the Church: "Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Rev. 5:9.) That this was an actual purchase is clear from the words of the Apostle, "Ye are bought with a price." If then we are among the number of "the redeemed (or as it is in the margin, according to the original, the "bought,") from among men, the first fruits unto God and the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4), we shall have certain evidences in order to prove our title good, according to God's divine law and custom, as Jeremiah had to prove his title good, according to the Jewish law and custom; and they will be of a similar or analogous nature. I may profess to have an interest in this wondrous redemption, to be one of those for whom that precious blood was shed. But may I not be justly asked here or hereafter, "Where are your evidences? You speak of redemption, and being interested in that precious blood by which it was accomplished. Where are your evidences of this interest? Show your title; produce your deeds. Where are the writings? Let us look at them and examine if they are such as are required to substantiate your title, and are properly drawn up and executed."

Now it is in redemption spiritual as in redemption literal: there must be two kinds of evidences—sealed and open, to make the title good; so that if either of these be deficient, improperly drawn, or wrongly executed, the claim is invalid, and we have at present no manifested interest in that precious blood through which there is the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. How important then it is for every one who desires to be right before God for time

and eternity, to know whether he has any or all of these evidences. And as these matters often lie with very great weight and power upon the heart and conscience of those who can neither trifle with God nor their own immortal souls, and cause many anxious thoughts and inquiries by night and by day, those of you whose minds are exercised upon this important point, will listen to me this morning very anxiously, I doubt not, to see if you can find that you do possess any or all of these evidences. I must, therefore, be very careful what I bring forward, and how I describe them; for they must be in harmony with the word of God and the experience of God's living family, if I am to be mouth for God. How narrowly and carefully, when an estate is to be sold, is the title examined by the intended purchaser. How his lawyer will examine every deed to see if any important paper be wanting, or any link in the chain of the title defective; and how many a fine estate can meet with no purchaser because the vendor cannot make his title good. But how much more important it is that you should well examine your title for eternity, and that I who, so to speak, am your lawyer to examine your title for you, as well as my own, should bring my utmost care and attention to see whether our title stands good. It won't do, either for you or me, to make mistakes in these matters, for here are immortal souls before me, and mine own amongst them, whose eternal destinies are hanging in the balance.

i. I shall first then attempt to explain and describe the evidences which are called here "sealed." Now by the expression "sealed," we may understand, according to scriptural language, two things. The word "sealed" here, as elsewhere, implies first, *secret*; and I will especially shew you why it means so in this particular instance. The deed, after it was fairly written, the names of the vendor and purchaser inserted, the boundaries of the land clearly described, and

the title as derived by genealogy to the owner correctly stated, was folded over, the two ends being brought together, and a seal put upon them by one or both of the attesting parties; the consequence of which was, that the inside could not be read. We find this to have been the case in other writings also, by referring to a passage in Isaiah (29:22, 12), where the prophet says, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book"—or writing, as the word means—"that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned"—in the original, one who can read writing—"saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot:" not from not being able to read, but I cannot read this particular writing, "for it is sealed." The two ends being brought together, the whole writing was closed by the seal, and therefore he could not read the interior. That was the case of the man who could read writing, but not in that particular instance; whilst the unlearned, that is, the man who, according to a common expression, was "no scholar," when the book was delivered to him, saying, "Read this, I pray thee," answered, "I am not learned," that is, "I cannot read writing at all." From this we gather that a "sealed book," or writing, means one so closed by the seal or seals that its contents cannot be read. In a similar way, we read in the Revelation, of "a book (or scroll), written within, and on the back side sealed with seven seals," and none was found worthy to open and read the book until the Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed. So the bride is spoken of in the Canticles as "a spring shut up, a fountain *sealed*," it being the custom to roll a large stone, as we find in Genesis (29:2, 3) to the mouth of the well to keep the water from being stolen or evaporated by the heat; and this was sometimes sealed, as was also the stone rolled to the Lord's sepulchre (Matt. 22:66), that it might be known whether it had been rolled away or not. In a similar sense the word is used in the charge given to Daniel, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words

are closed up and *sealed* till the time of the end." (Dan. 22:9); that is, they cannot be read or understood, as being secret till the time of the end shall disclose their meaning. It is evident, therefore, that we may, spiritually and experimentally, explain a sealed evidence to signify, in the first instance, a secret evidence—an evidence that lies hidden from the eyes of men, and is only between God and a man's own soul, corresponding to the words, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." (Psalm 25:14.)

I shall have, then, now to unfold some of these secret evidences of an interest in the love and blood of Christ; and we may observe that, though secret, they are "sealed," as bearing God's own stamp and attestation.

1. Now what is the first of these sealed or secret evidences? *The possession of divine life.* "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "The Son quickeneth whom he will." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Until divine life is communicated to the soul out of the fulness of Christ, there is not, there cannot, be any evidence of interest in his precious blood. Whatever be the secret purposes of God, it is impossible that either he who is dead in sin, or dead in a profession, can have any evidence of an interest in atoning blood, or that any one could so judge of him who is possessed of any discernment of what grace really is. This, therefore, is the reason why I have laid it down as the *first* sealed or secret evidence: for until divine life is communicated there is no evidence. But no sooner is divine life implanted in the soul, than it begins to bubble and spring up and thus to manifest its existence. The Lord, therefore, told the woman of Samaria, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting

life." When divine life is communicated, it immediately begins to manifest itself; for it is like a spring in a field, or out of a hillside, which breaks forth, as it were of itself, and cannot be kept back or pent up by putting your foot upon it. It is surprising what a change is created in the soul by the communication to it of divine life. It is truly, as the prophet speaks, that "in the wilderness waters break out," the wilderness heart of man, "and streams in the desert," that parched ground of the soul, that dry and thirsty land in which there is neither food nor water, that habitation of dragons where each serpent lies coiled up in his den. But even there, at the voice of the Lord, which is upon many waters, "the wilderness is made a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." How soft, how tender, how simple and sincere, how full of life and feeling, how earnestly bent after God, how thoroughly changed from its former carnality and worldliness, is the soul made alive unto God by regenerating grace. It is impossible to describe it, and yet without having known and felt it, all our religion is vain, for it never had a real beginning, it never came as the pure gift of God; and a profession built upon it will only end in eternal sorrow. Now though this evidence, as being a sealed or secret evidence, is hidden from the eyes of others, it is not hidden from its favoured possessor; for it is, so to speak, like a spring in a field, its own evidence. I do not mean to assert that it is always known as such in its first communication, for at that time there is usually little judgment or discernment of the work of God in the soul; but that a change has been wrought within, and that this change manifests itself by a springing up of a hitherto unknown life, and a flow of new and peculiar feeling in the soul, is to my mind beyond all question.

2. But we will now take another of these sealed or secret evidences of an interest in redeeming blood; and that shall be *the fear of God*. This, though not the first evidence, is the

first covenant blessing and a pledge of all the rest. "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. 32:40.) But now observe how this evidence is connected with that which I have just described. It is declared to be "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Prov. 14:27.) Do you not see the connection here between the fear of God and the implantation and possession of divine life? For it is "a fountain of life," and, therefore, there is divine life in it as its foundation and substance. We also read that "by it men depart from evil." (Prov. 16:6.) And we know very well that till a man departs from evil there is no evidence of his possessing the life of God. Now this fear of the Lord makes a man's conscience sore and tender. It therefore opens a way for the law to come into the conscience with its piercing convictions; for till the heart is made alive unto God by quickening grace, and the conscience made tender and sore by the implantation of godly fear, a man has no ear to hear, so as to fear any threatening, as he has no ear to hear, so as to believe any promises. It therefore makes a way, so to speak, for the law to come into his conscience as a convicting word from the Lord to bring him in guilty before God. And though this fear, as coming from God, as a new covenant grace and gift, is a filial fear, is clean and enduring for ever, coexists with every other grace, and stands in abiding union with faith, hope, and love; yet as through the condemning sentence of the law and the accusing verdict of a guilty conscience, there is almost invariably mixed with it a great deal of servile fear which hath torment, it is hard to distinguish at times whether we are in possession of the fear of the Lord, which is our treasure, and a fountain of life, or merely under the influence of that fear which worketh death, and is ever attended with guilt and bondage. But sooner or later the matter is made clear to those who possess it, that they have the fear of the Lord as a new covenant grace; for in due time the love of

God shed abroad in their heart, which casts out the fear which hath torment, strengthens that godly fear which is a fountain of life and the beginning of wisdom, and which those of old possessed in such ample measure when "they walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9:31.) This fear is to be most tenderly cherished, and never brow-beaten, despised, or resisted; for if we are to serve God acceptably, it must be with reverence and godly fear. We are also bidden to pass the time of our sojourning here in its exercise, and are exhorted to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (Heb. 12:28; 1 Peter 1:17; 2 Cor. 7:1.)

3. But what shall I say is another of these sealed or secret evidences? *A Spirit of prayer.* Wherever the Lord begins a work of grace upon the soul by quickening it into divine life, planting his fear deep in the heart, and making the conscience alive and tender, he pours out, according to his promise by the prophet Zechariah (12:10), the Spirit of grace and of supplications. Now this spirit of prayer thus poured out upon the soul distinguishes the convictions which are spiritual and in God's saints from the convictions which are merely natural, and which may be found in the very worst of God's enemies. It is a great mistake to think that none have convictions of sin but those who are called by God's grace. I have known myself several instances, and have heard of more, in which there were the deepest convictions of sin that never issued in manifested salvation, but either ended in despair, or gradually wore off until the subjects of them went back into the world. But those who were thus convinced of sin never had the spirit of prayer given to them; for the spirit of prayer enables the soul under these convictions to pour itself out before God. And though the sin burdened child of God may not, and probably will not, get sensible relief for some time, yet still there is so far a measure of relief

communicated to him by the very power that is given him to pour out his soul before God by God's own Spirit, that it lightens a good deal the weight of his convictions, and supports him under them. We do not find it anywhere recorded in the word that Cain, or Saul, or Ahithophel, or Judas prayed. And yet these men had very sharp convictions, enough to drive one to despair, and the others to suicide. God had not poured out upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications; and therefore, when convictions fell upon their conscience, they had nothing before them but hell and wrath, terror and despair, and thus they perished in their sins. But the Lord pours out upon his people the spirit of grace and of supplications for the very purpose of counteracting this despair, and enabling them to pour out their heart before him as a God who heareth and answereth prayer. If God has blessed you with this praying spirit, you have a sealed evidence, and this will one day, if not now, prove your title good.

4. Another secret evidence is *a bending of the soul toward truth*. You will find in persons under great natural convictions an enmity to God's truth, rather than any falling under it, or bending toward it. When their presumption and hypocrisy are detected, so far from falling under the power of the word that speaks of judgment, or any bending of their mind toward it, as testifying of mercy, they hate God's truth with mortal hatred, and manifest the enmity of the carnal mind against it. The sovereignty of God, the doctrines of election and predestination to eternal life, the thorough helplessness of the creature, the depth of the fall, and that nothing short of free, distinguishing, and superabounding grace can save the soul, are fought against by them with deadly enmity, though they may have the curse of the law and the terrors of the Almighty as a burning fire in their conscience. Thus they rebel against the light, and by doing so, prove themselves

children of darkness. But how different is the case with those who are under spiritual convictions. In them the Lord secretly, by applying his word with sweetness and power to their believing heart, raises up a bending toward truth. Being children of light they bend toward the light. You may see this naturally in a plant. Look at a geranium in a window or a greenhouse. You will see that it always bends toward the light. To preserve, therefore, the plant in any degree of shape and symmetry, the gardener is obliged to keep continually turning it round, so as to bring every part to the light. So it is in grace: there is a bending of the soul toward the light, and for the same reason spiritually as with the plant naturally. Without light the plant cannot thrive. It therefore instinctively loves the light, seeks it, and bends toward it. So the living soul loves the light, comes to it, seeks it, and bends toward it in faith and affection. In a new-born soul there is, as in an infant left in the dark, a crying after light. To illustrate this, I cannot help quoting a few simple lines by a great modern poet, which have often struck me as containing much spiritual truth, though it is to be feared that he who wrote them had no such meaning or intention:—

"And what am *I*?  
An infant crying in the night;  
An infant crying for the light;  
And with no language but a cry." *Tennyson*.

How true this is in grace. As an infant in the night cries for the light, as afraid of the darkness and loving light, so a child of grace cannot bear to be left in the dark, and is therefore ever crying out for light, and bending toward it, eager to catch the least glimmering ray. Now, it is this bending of the soul toward truth, the secret movements of the mind toward the word of God, seeking instruction, encouragement, and consolation from it, receiving it as from God's mouth, and

embracing it in faith and hope, which distinguish the living child from the dead professor, and prove its birth of God.

5. Another sealed evidence is a *secret love to God's people*, an esteeming of them as the excellent of the earth, a feeling unworthy of being even in their company, and yet a great desire to hear their conversation, to resort where they resort, and be with them in life and death. We see this beautifully exemplified in Ruth's cleaving to Naomi when Orpah left her: "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth 1:16.) We trace this feature, also, all through the Acts of the Apostles, that no sooner were any called by grace, than they joined themselves to the Lord's people, and abode with them in spite of the heaviest persecution. And does not John give this as a blessed evidence of divine life? "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."

Now these are sealed evidences in the sense of being *secret*, because they lie between God and the soul. And yet, though in this sense they are sealed, they still retain the original meaning of a seal; for they are God's own stamp, if not a full attestation to his own work, and thus carry with them an internal evidence of a possession of, if not an assured interest in, the life and grace of God.

ii. But the word "sealed" has another meaning, which I shall now attempt to open. Sealing was with the Jews, as with us, a means of *attesting* a deed. It was with their law as with ours. It was not sufficient to sign a deed; it was necessary also to attach to it a seal, and most probably the seal of both parties, both of the vendor and the purchaser. We may, therefore, explain a sealed evidence as one that bears upon

it the express and peculiar *stamp* of God, as giving an assurance of salvation. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13.) And again, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. 1:22.) In this sense a sealed evidence is God's *full* attestation of his own work, the stamp of the Spirit of God which he puts upon his own divine operations. It is true, indeed, that these sealed evidences are not enjoyed by all the family of God, or only enjoyed in a small measure: but it will ever be found, that the want of them in clear manifestation leaves an aching void, and that without them there is no full satisfaction of an interest in Christ. I shall now, therefore, name a few of them.

1. The first of these sealed evidences which I shall mention is, a *revelation of Christ* to the soul, a spiritual and inward manifestation of the Son of God, a bringing nigh of his Person and work, of his blood and righteousness, so that though not seen with the bodily eye, he is seen by the eye of faith, and as such is laid hold of, embraced, and brought into the heart by a divine power. Thus we find the apostle speaking of his own experience in this matter: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to *reveal his Son in me.*" (Gal. 1:15, 16.) How plainly does the apostle speak here of an inward revelation of Christ to his soul; and he seems to intimate the same thing when he elsewhere testifies: "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.) Indeed, there is no other way of truly knowing Christ except in the light of his own manifestation, for it is with the Son as with the Father: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 11:27.) Whatever desires the soul may

have after Christ, or whatever hopes it may entertain of an interest in him, it can never be really or fully satisfied without a personal manifestation of him, so as to see by faith his blessed face, and to hear by faith his heavenly voice.

2. Another sealed evidence is the *witness of the Holy Spirit* to our spirit that we are God's children. (Rom. 8:16.) This, indeed, is the especial sealing whereby the soul is sealed unto the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30.) It is indeed the special work of the Holy Ghost to bring this attesting seal, according to the words I before quoted, "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise;" for as a seal attests a deed, so the Spirit's inward witness attests the work of God upon the soul, and is the evidence of sonship. We find in various other passages of Scripture the same meaning attached to the words, "seal" and "sealed." Thus the Bride says, "Set me as a seal on thy heart, as a seal on thine arm." (Song 8:6.) Here she expresses her desire so to be sealed inwardly upon the heart, and so to be worn outwardly as a seal upon the arm of her Beloved that she might have his attesting assurance of her interest both in his love and in his power. So John the Baptist says of the believer who receives God's testimony concerning his dear Son, that he thereby "sets to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33); that is, he is able to attest from his own experience the truth of God's testimony of Jesus, as having an inward witness of it in his own soul. So the apostle says to the Corinthians, "The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:2); that is, "Ye are, both to me and to others, an attestation, an assuring, confirming evidence that I am an apostle of God by the blessing which my word has been made to you."

3. *Forgiveness of sin* as made known to the soul by the power of God, is another sealed evidence. All indeed do not enjoy in equal measure this sense of special and personal

forgiveness: but they have the substance of it when Christ is revealed to their soul, and they have the sealing testimony of the Spirit in their heart. Their guilt is then sensibly removed, their doubts and fears dispelled, liberty proclaimed, and peace with God enjoyed; and what can all this spring from but the forgiveness of their sins through the blood of Christ?

4. The last sealed evidence which I shall mention is, *the love of God shed abroad* in the heart by the Holy Ghost. This evidence the Apostle gives in connection with being justified by faith, and so having peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:1-5.) As long as we are looking to ourselves or to the law for justification, we can never have peace with God; but when faith comes so as to make and manifest us "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:25, 25), then the love of God is shed abroad in the heart; for now there is no barrier between him and us. Justification being complete through the putting away of sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there is a reconciliation to God; and when this reconciliation is known and felt, then the love of God comes as an attesting seal to bear witness that his anger is for ever put away.

iii. But I shall pass on now to consider the *open* evidences, because there were to be open as well as sealed, according to the law and custom; so that if either of these were wanting, the evidence of the title or of the purchase was incomplete. Suppose, for instance, the title were disputed: and the vendor were to say to the purchaser, "Here is the evidence of my title." "Well let me look at it," he would reply. "It appears to be all right. The seal seems to be quite correct, and so does the signature, and I can find no fault with either. But where is the other deed? This sealed evidence is not enough. There must be an open evidence also. Where is that?" "Oh I have not got that; I have lost it;

or I never had it." "Then," he would answer, "you have not made your title good. I admit the truth and authenticity of the sealed deed; but unless you can produce and show the open evidence as well, you cannot prove your title good."

Now apply this. To make it manifest that we have an interest in redemption by the blood of Christ, we must have open evidences as well as sealed ones. The sealed evidences, as I have explained, could not be read because the ends of the deed were brought together, and therefore the interior was hidden from view. But the open evidence was left unsealed, for the very purpose that the inside might not be hidden. It was, indeed, signed by the witnesses to attest its authenticity; but it was purposely left open that its contents might be read. How, then, shall we interpret this spiritually? Let me show yet. Wherever there is an interest in redeeming blood, there always are such open evidences as can be seen and read by others. This seems to be the meaning of the Apostle, when he said to the Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us." (2 Cor. 3:2, 3.) There is a generation, and I fear a large and increasing one, of light, loose, inconsistent professors, whose lives are as much a disgrace to themselves as a reproach to the cause of God and truth. It is, therefore, all the more necessary for faithful ministers to bring forward and insist upon these open evidences as a solemn warning to them, and a salutary caution for all.

1. Now what shall I say is the first *open* evidence? Evidently the *visible change* that takes place in a man's whole life and conduct when regenerating grace visits his soul. To illustrate this point, I shall here mention a little about myself. In the autumn of the year 1825, I was residing at Oxford, earning a comfortable livelihood by taking pupils, and looking forward

to obtaining a still higher grade in my college. But quite unexpectedly, just at this time, a very eligible offer was made to me, and a high salary held out as an inducement to go to Ireland for a short time for the purpose of educating, for the University, two sons of a gentleman of wealth and high position, whose country seat was not far from Dublin. Now, it was not to my interest to accept such an offer, as I was in good circumstances, and it was rather breaking my connection with my college, and so far somewhat interfering with my future prospects to leave the University even for a short period; but no doubt the hand of God was in it, though I saw it not; for his thoughts were not my thoughts, nor his ways my ways. But I was tempted by the large salary, and went to Ireland in 1826, where I spent that year very happily and comfortably, for I had everything that money could buy or heart could wish. But all this time I knew nothing experimentally of the things of God; for though highly moral, as far as regards man, and having a great respect for religion, the grace of God had not then touched my heart. But in the beginning of 1827, in the early spring, the Lord was pleased to bring upon me a very great trial and affliction, which I cannot name, but it was one of the greatest sorrows I ever passed through in my life, and it was in and under that affliction that the Lord was pleased, I have every reason to believe, to begin his work of grace upon my soul, and to do for me the things I have spoken of, in giving me the light of life, planting his fear in my heart, pouring out upon me the Spirit of prayer, and communicating those other sealed evidences of the first kind which I have laid before you; for though not without a hope in God's mercy, I was not favoured, until some years after, with any special manifestation of Christ. Now when I came back to Oxford in the autumn of 1827, the change in my character, life, and conduct was so marked that every one took notice of it. I did not perceive myself, so distinctly, this outward change,

though I well knew the inward; but it was very soon observed by others, and especially at my own College, and, in fact, very soon brought upon me a heavy storm of persecution, which, with other concurring causes, eventually drove me from the University. I have no wish to put myself forward, and the only reason why I have mentioned these circumstances is to show that wherever there is any real work of grace upon a man's heart, it will be made openly manifest; that others can see as well as he can feel that something has been wrought in his soul, by a divine power, which has made him a different man from what he was before. It might, perhaps, have been easy for you and cost you little sacrifice to make a profession of religion, but it was not so with me. As fellow of a college and looking forward to the honourable and advantageous office of public tutor, it was no small cross for me to break off old friendships, and incur the dislike and contempt of the ruling authorities, and thus with my own hands pull down all my prospects of preferment and emolument for life. But there was a power resting on me in those days which made religion with me as everything, and the world as nothing. Thus I must testify, from my own experience, that if we lack this open evidence of a change having been wrought in us, we certainly are deficient in a very main particular.

2. But what is the next evidence? *Separation from the world.* "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," is God's own command; and it is one which by his grace will be always obeyed by his living family. The want of this separation, then, is the want of an open evidence to make our title good. If we are still in the world, hand and glove, in heart and spirit with it, not separated from it, its society, its amusements, its pursuits, its pleasures, its delights, its men, its maxims, we certainly lack an evidence, an open evidence, of a divine change having

been wrought in our soul; for I am well satisfied that as Christ hath no concord with Belial, and the temple of God no agreement with idols, so the people of God in whom he dwells and walks can have no fellowship with the world. John is plain upon this point: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And if the love of the Father be in us, neither shall we love the world nor will the world love us.

3. *Joining the people of God*, taking up the cross, denying ourselves, submitting to all the mortification, disappointment, and often crushed, or at least broken prospects which are entailed upon uniting ourselves to God's despised family, is another open evidence. Moses had it when he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season. Paul had it when, as soon as he was called by the grace of God, he joined the disciples at Damascus. And all through the Acts of the Apostles you will find invariably, when any were wrought upon by a divine power and brought to faith in Christ and a knowledge of the truth, the first evidence they gave of it was by joining themselves to his manifested people.

4. *Honesty and uprightness* in all acts of business, simplicity, sincerity, and trust-worthiness in word and deed, carrying out our profession according to our various stations in life, and manifesting there is a power given to us to make us good husbands, good wives, good children, good servants, good masters—these are all so many open evidences, and the last which I shall have time to mention, of an interest in redeeming blood. A tyrannical husband, a fretful discontented wife, an unkind father, a rebellious son, a harsh master, a fraudulent servant, what right have these to call themselves saints of God? What right indeed have any persons who walk inconsistently, and by their words and

actions bring a reproach upon the truth of God, to claim an experimental knowledge of the work of Grace, or to believe they are interested in the precious blood of the Lamb? Has not our Lord said, "By their fruits ye shall know them?" How otherwise can men judge of the truth and power of religion unless they see the fruits of a godly life attend it? See then that you have open evidences as well as sealed, for both are equally needed to prove your title good.

II.—But I pass on now to our second point, which is *the place* in which, according to the word of the Lord, these *evidences were to be deposited*. "*Put them in an earthen vessel.*"

It was not to be a gold vessel, or a silver vessel; for either of these two metals would be too expensive. And if buried in the ground, as most likely the earthen vessel was, they might be dug up and carried away. Nor was it a copper vessel, which verdigris might destroy; nor an iron vessel that would breed rust and either ruin the deeds altogether, or make the writing illegible. But they were to be deposited in an "earthen vessel." There were several reasons for this kind of vessel being selected, and amongst them, I might name both its cleanness and its duration; for if it was well baked and carefully fitted with a close lid, it might in that warm climate and dry sandy soil last for centuries. Some of you may perhaps have seen in the British Museum the large and beautiful collection of Etruscan vases. Now these Etruscan vases have been all dug up from the tombs of Etruria in Italy, and are at the least two thousand five hundred, or two thousand six hundred years old; and yet they are in perfect preservation, and every line of the figures depicted on them as distinct as the first day on which they were drawn. As, then, these sealed and open evidences were intended to be carefully preserved for future reference, there was a wisdom in putting them into an earthen vessel to be kept clean and

uninjured; for this vessel was to be kept in some place of safe deposit, or most probably, to be interred in the earth in the very field of which it contained the title deeds. Thus, at the end of the seventy years' captivity, Jeremiah's collateral descendant—for he had no lineal ones, not being married—might dig it up, find in it these writings uninjured, and then might say, in the face of all claimants, "This land is mine; here is my title; for these deeds have been preserved in this earthen vessel, and here they are as fresh this day as when they were first deposited there." I shall, by and by, show how this bears a spiritual meaning; but I shall first endeavour to explain what seems spiritually intimated by the earthen vessel in which these evidences were deposited. It represents spiritually the poor frail body in which God has lodged the evidences sealed and open of an interest in redeeming blood, for we have a key to these words in the expression of the Apostle, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." (2 Cor. 6:7.)

But why is this poor frail tabernacle called "an earthen vessel?" 1. Look first at its base *original*. See how man was created out of the dust of the earth; his body, therefore, will always bear marks of that clayey origin. Some vessels may indeed be larger than others, made almost, as it would appear, of better, or at least more carefully wrought and tempered clay, and, like the Etruscan vases, may be more beautiful in shape, more decorated and adorned, and put to more honourable uses; for comparing man with man, as the world views them, one may be but a flower-pot hardly worth a penny, and another, an Etruscan vase, worth a thousand pounds. And yet each at the best is but of the earth, earthy. So rank and titles, honours and dignities, wealth, learning, and education, may adorn some, and ignorance, poverty, and rags debase others; yet all are taken out of the same pit

of clay, all are moulded on the same potter's wheel, all baked in the same furnace, and all eventually come to the same end.

2. But again, how *frail* an earthen vessel is. One of these beautiful vases might have been struck by the spade of the excavator, and all its beauty and value destroyed in a moment. So how frail these bodies of ours are. How by a falling tile, a railway accident, an attack of sickness, a stroke of paralysis, in a moment our earthen vessel may be broken to pieces, and be but a piece of lifeless clay.

3. And yet it *securely* keeps the evidences. As in the natural figure, the earthen vessel kept the evidences untarnished, though surrounded with the clods of the valley, amongst which it was buried, so if God has planted his fear in your heart, his faith in your soul, and his divine life in your breast, they may be surrounded with all that is evil, but are not tarnished thereby, nor their original purity destroyed. The earthen vessel in which Baruch, according to Jeremiah's command, put these sealed and open evidences, most probably was buried in the soil in some corner of the field at Anathoth. All the dust and dirt of the ground might surround it, but they could never reach the interior, nor dirty the evidences, nor stain the writings. So when God puts his fear, his faith, and his divine life in the heart, though they may be and are surrounded by all manner of sin, they are not injured or tarnished thereby, but are still as pure as when God planted them, and will one day come out as bright.

III.—And this leads me to my last point, *the main reason* why these evidences were put into the earthen vessel. "*To continue many days.*"

God had a special reason for thus dealing with Jeremiah. It

was to show him, and to the elect remnant through him, that the captivity was not to be perpetual, but that there would be a return to the land of Canaan, which he had given to their fathers for an everlasting possession. The buying, then, of this field was to be a pledge that the land should be again in their possession. We find, therefore, the Lord thus speaking at the end of the chapter, "And fields shall be bought in this land whereof ye say, It is desolate, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah." (Jer. 32:43, 44.)

Those who were not destroyed by sword and famine were going into captivity, and the land was to be desolate seventy years. Thus for all that appeared, God was not faithful to his promise to Abraham, for he had given the holy land to him and his children for a perpetual possession, and now they were to pass from it and never to return. God, therefore, when he said to Jeremiah, "Buy the field; take the evidences; put them into an earthen vessel to continue many days," gave him thereby a pledge of a return of his family to Anathoth, for, as I have intimated, they were to be deposited in a safe spot, and most probably buried in the very ground which was bought. At the end, then, of the seventy years, the heir of the property returning from Babylon, would come to the field, and having been told, as a family secret, or in some family record, the exact spot where the earthen vessel was, would dig it up, open it, produce the sealed and open evidences contained in it, and, if his title were disputed by any claimant, would be able to say, "This land is mine; here is my title; here are my deeds."

But now let me apply this. In a sense, a man's evidences of an interest in Christ, both sealed and open, are buried with him. When you go to the cemetery to attend the funeral of

some dear saint of God, after the coffin has been lodged in the earth you look down upon it with tearful eyes; and it is as if there he lay with all his evidences buried with him. You believe that that coffin contains the body of a child of God. Why do you believe it? Because of his evidences—the sealed and the open, that, so to speak, go into the ground with him, are put into his coffin, and there lie side by side with his interred body. The evidences of Jeremiah's purchase were "to continue many days." So in the case of the buried saint, these evidences will continue till the resurrection morn, as Jeremiah's evidences continued till the return from the captivity. Now, when the resurrection morn comes, all these sleeping bodies of the saints, these earthen vessels which have been deposited in the ground, and their title deeds with them, will rise at the sounding of the great trumpet, will stand before the great white throne, and each will have, so to speak, his evidences in his hands. He will hold in one hand his sealed evidences; he will hold in the other his open evidences, and God will acknowledge both of them. Is not this manifested in that striking parable of the sheep and the goats? Did not the Lord bring forth, in that parable, the evidences that the sheep had to distinguish them from the goats, such as their feeding, clothing, and visiting him in his people? Thus, so to speak, the saints of God will all rise with their evidences in their hands.

And then what of the others? They will rise too; but what of their evidences? Alas! they have none. When the angels come to divide the sheep from the goats, to gather the wheat into the garner and to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, they will look for the evidences, and if any be bold enough to say, as some will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wondrous works?" What will the answer be; "Depart from me; I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." Where are

your evidences? Where was the life of God in your soul? where the fear of God in your heart? where the Spirit of grace and of supplications? where the departing from evil? where any revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ? where any application of his atoning blood in the forgiveness of sin? where any shedding abroad of the love of God in the soul? where any separation from the world, any living to the honour and glory of God, any taking up of the cross and denying yourselves, any doing the will of God and obeying the precepts as well as professing to believe the promises? Where are your evidences? They will be dumb. Like the man who was found without a wedding garment, they will be speechless; and all for want of these evidences, for "the wicked shall be silent in darkness." But the righteous will be able to produce their evidences, their sealed and their open; and these evidences will be acknowledged, as giving them a title to their eternal inheritance, a manifested interest in redeeming blood; and thus they will have an entrance for ever into the joy of their Lord.