

## Reconciliation and Salvation

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, May 16, 1858

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Romans 5:10

There are two points of divine truth on which the Scriptures are very express and plain, and yet both of them are most stoutly resisted by the pride and self-righteousness of man's heart. These two truths are the completeness of the fall, and the equal or more than equal completeness of the recovery. Neither of these truths, though for different reasons, is palatable to man's self-righteous nature. As to the first, the depth of the fall, how few are willing to admit that man is in such a state as the word of God describes him to be—"dead in trespasses and sins;" "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart;" "serving divers lusts and pleasures;" "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another," "having no hope, and without God in the world." But how plainly are all these evil fruits traced up in the Scriptures to their parent stock—the Adam fall. How clear on this point is the language of the apostle: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death," not only naturally but spiritually, "passed upon all men for that [or "in whom," margin] all have sinned;" "through the offence of one many be dead;" "the judgment was by one to condemnation;" "by one man's offence death reigned by one;" "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;" "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. 5.) And yet these positive and express declarations of Scripture are so opposed to that natural principle which exists in all of

us, that though, to a certain degree, maimed by the fall, yet we are not so thoroughly helpless as not to be able to do something to please God and obtain salvation, that they ever will be exposed to all the desperate rebellion that man's wicked heart is capable of manifesting. It is true that from a kind of traditional respect for the Scriptures there is a bridle in the jaws of many which prevents them from speaking against them; but when the truth contained in them is brought forth and enforced in other language, then it is that the enmity manifests itself. In a similar way, the other grand and glorious truth which is the correlative of the first, the completeness of the recovery, the perfection of the finished work of Christ, the full atonement which he has made by his bloodshedding and death, is as much opposed as the depth of the fall, because it equally stands in the way of that self-righteousness which is innate in every man's disposition. See how it cuts both ways. If I can do something toward my own salvation, then the fall is not complete; for it has left me some power. If I can do something for my own salvation, then the recovery is not complete; for to become effectual it needs my co-operation. But how plainly has the Holy Ghost revealed not only the depth and completeness of the fall, but the height and completeness of the recovery. The apostle, in the chapter before us, ascribes justification to the obedience of Christ as plainly as condemnation to the disobedience of Adam, summing up the contrast he has drawn between the two covenant heads in these words of truth and power: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom.

5:17, 18, 19.)

In the words of our text, we find him seeking to encourage the desponding saints of God, by laying before them what Christ has already done, and what he still lives to do. It is the summing up of the argument laid down in the preceding verses. The main point which he enforces, and whereby he sets off the wondrous love of God, is that "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The death of Christ and that for "the ungodly" is the key-note of his melodious theme—the grand fundamental truth of the gospel—on which he insists and enforces with all the strength of his pen. From this gospel doctrine he draws a no less gospel conclusion, that thereby God "commendeth," or, as the word means, "recommendeth," "his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He would thus to the utmost of his power enhance and set before our eyes the greatness of the love of God; that this love was not to "the righteous man," of whom he had spoken in the preceding verse, if indeed such a one could be found; nor for "the good," that is, the kind, benevolent man for whom some would even dare to die; but that it flowed so freely forth towards us while we were yet sinners that he sent his only begotten Son to die for us. He would thus open a door of hope for every sensible sinner who is led by divine teaching into an experimental acquaintance with the depth of the fall, and encourage him to come to God as he is, in all his sin and shame, that he may receive mercy from the hand of him whose name and nature are love. He then goes on still further to encourage the drooping saints of God by pointing out to them the fruits of justification by the obedience and bloodshedding of Christ and the way in which it makes salvation sure: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The saints of God are justified, that is, are accounted righteous, through

the blood of Christ; and though it may seem at first sight unusual language, yet it perfectly harmonises with an expression in the same chapter: "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (verse 19); for the bloodshedding and sacrifice of Christ were a part of this obedience. Thus by setting before them that they are already in a state of justification and acceptance before God; that the blood shed upon the cross is their plea and title to eternal bliss—a plea and title that never can be set aside by the curse and condemnation of the Law or the accusations of Satan and a guilty conscience, he encourages them to believe that they shall be fully saved, and are in fact already saved from the wrath to come.

But this glorious and most encouraging truth he sets forth more fully in the words of our text, as the general summing up of the preceding argument: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

In bringing before you what I seem to see and feel as the spiritual and experimental interpretation of these words, I shall, with God's help and blessing, divide our subject into two leading branches, showing, under the first, the *reconciliation of enemies*; and, under the second, *the salvation of friends*.

I.—*First, the reconciliation of enemies.*

i. What language can describe more fully or forcibly the lost, ruined, undone condition of man by nature than the declaration from the mouth of an inspired apostle that he is an enemy of God? Have we ever considered the depth and meaning of that pointed and pregnant expression? Have we ever viewed it in the light of God's countenance and seen in

that pure, holy, and heavenly light what it is to be an enemy of the great God of heaven and earth? Let us endeavour, then, as the Lord the Spirit may graciously enable us, to devote a few moments to the consideration of this point, for only as we are led into an experimental acquaintance with it, humbling though it maybe to our pride or painful to our conscience, can we see or feel any grace or glory in the reconciliation which has been effected by the bloodshedding and death of Jesus.

But how came this to pass? What brought us into this miserable condition? God did not make man his enemy. On the contrary, he made him upright, in his own image, after his own likeness. Here was friendship, not enmity. But what a depth of condescension was it in God to breathe into man an immortal soul, bearing in every feature and lineament a visible representation of the purity and perfection of himself, that is, so far as a created, and therefore finite and limited being was capable of it. Man thus made in the image of God was God's friend. God walked with, and talked with him in the garden of Eden; and acceptable were his visits, for a divine familiarity came with them, and such a mutual intercourse as a pure and innocent man could maintain with a condescending God. Standing in his created purity and native innocence, Adam had no alarming apprehension of the majesty of God, for there was no bar between him and his Maker, any more than there is now in the angels who ever stand in his presence. But ah! how soon the scene changed: how Satan envied man's happiness; how determined that old enemy the Serpent was to make a breach between God and man who seemed in his eyes raised to occupy a place in God's favour from which he himself had fallen; and how fearfully, through God's permission, he succeeded by planting, through the subtle medium of temptation, in the breast of man the same evil root of wickedness that had

struck so deeply into his own being, degrading and polluting a pure angel of light into a foul fiend of darkness. Sin being thus, as it were, infused into the heart of man, broke up that friendship which existed between the Creator and the creature, and hurled man down into a state of enmity and alienation from the Author of his being. God did not put enmity into man's heart; God was not the author of man's sin. Satan was the author of the whole. Yes, it was the old enemy, the Serpent, who injected sin as a secret and subtle poison into man's nature, which was created pure and yet subject to fall, and by this infusion of sin, introduced that enmity and alienation into his heart, which constituted him an enemy of God. Let us be clear here. Satan himself could have had no power of introducing sin into man's heart but through the medium of temptation. Though I have spoken figuratively of the injection and infusion of sin; I do not mean thereby that Satan infused sin into man's nature as a venomous serpent by a sudden bite introduces poison into the blood of a bitten man. He rather, to change the figure, presented a cup to man's lips, which seemed sweet and good, but really contained deadly poison. It was the free act of man to take and drink it in disobedience to the revealed will of God. Thus, though Satan was the tempter, and man the tempted, yet, by yielding to the temptation, man sinned by a voluntary act, and so became a personal transgressor. Now this sin, with all the alienation and enmity consequent upon it, has been handed down from our fallen ancestor to us. We are born into this world enemies of God, what I may call natural enemies, because we bear the same corrupt nature that Adam had when "he begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness."

ii. But have you ever considered what it is to be an enemy of God, and what it means and implies? It is to be at war with all the perfections of God, nay more, with the very Person of

the Almighty. Such is man by nature and practice. Such are we, every one of us as born into this world,—at open or secret, direct or implied war against the Majesty of heaven, and against all those glorious perfections whereby God is what he is. Thus, man by nature, is at war against God's *holiness*, for his heart and life are unholy, unclean, polluted, and vile; and as such, he is at war with the spotless purity and holiness of God, as opposed to the corruption and uncleanness of his heart. There always is a war, express or implied, between opposites. Filth is at war with cleanliness, drunkenness with sobriety, unchastity with purity, falsehood with truth, covetousness with liberality, pride with humility, ungodliness with godliness. Similarly, man by nature is at war against God's *justice*, for he is ever doing the things that the Law, which is the declaration of God's justice, expressly and positively forbids, and never does a single thing that it with equal authority commands. He is at war with God's *omnipresence*, daily committing those iniquities which God's presence, were it known in his soul, would effectually prevent. He is an enemy to God's *omniscience*, as living in ignorance and contempt of that omniscient eye which reads every secret thought of his heart, and is privy to every act performed by his hands; and to that omniscient ear which hears every idle, and worse than idle word, continually issuing from his lips. He is at war against God's *truth*; for he hates it with a determined hatred. He is an enemy to God's *people*; for he persecutes them and despises them to the utmost of his power. And he hates God's *word*, because it condemns him; and he knows if he were to live under its power and influence he must give up those practices which that word condemns.

But you, or some of you say, "I am sure I am not that character: I am not an enemy of God." O, my friend, it is because you do not know yourself; it is because there is a

veil of unbelief and self-righteousness over your heart, which hides yourself from yourself. Did you see what you were by nature; if you had a right view of what your carnal mind really is, you would confess with the apostle it was "enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Could you read your heart as God scans it with his omniscient eye, you would see nothing but enmity against God there. You would see that your heart by nature hates what God loves, and loves what God hates. And can there be a greater proof of enmity than that? You would see that your inclinations and desires, thoughts and affections were all at war against every perfection of heaven; and can there be a greater mark of enmity than to be bent on doing what God abhors? You would find your will totally opposed to the revealed will of God; and can there be a greater mark of enmity than a will diametrically opposite? You would find there was no love in your soul for God or godliness; no love for heaven and holiness; no love for God's truth and the perfections of his adorable Majesty; no love for Christ or his people; but, on the contrary, you would find nothing but enmity, rebellion, pride, and self-righteousness lurking and working in its lowest depths. You must not think because you are moral and upright, correct in your outward walk, and consistent in all the relations of life, that you are not by nature an enemy of God. Neutrality in this warfare is enmity. Not to be on Christ's side is to be against Christ; not to be separate from God's enemies is to be God's enemy; not to love him is to hate him, and not to be his is to be Satan's. The Lord, if it be his will, give you light to see there are but two classes—enemies and friends, children of God, or children of the wicked one.

But this state of enmity and alienation from God we have each to learn for ourselves by personal experience; and until we learn thus, in some measure, what we are by nature and



practice—enemies of God by wicked works, we never shall be able to enter into that wondrous way of reconciliation which God has revealed in the Scriptures of truth, and which he makes known with a divine power to all whom he brings within the bonds of the Covenant.

iii. This leads me to the "reconciliation" spoken of in our text as effected by the death of God's dear Son. Good men use the expression sometimes "a reconciled God;" and there is a sense in which it may be properly used. There being an alienation between God and man, there being enmity on man's part and righteous indignation on the part of God against sin, there was a necessity that this anger of God should be appeased. The anger in the bosom of God was not against the persons of the elect, for being chosen in Christ and viewed complete in him, they were ever "accepted in the beloved." But sin having made a breach between God and them, the anger of the Almighty was justly due to their transgressions, and needed to be appeased or pacified before it could cease. Thus the church says, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isai. 12:1.) So the Lord speaks, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isai. 54:8); thus he says also in Ezekiel, "When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." (Ezekiel 16:63.) These, and similar expressions, show that there is a sense, a sound and Scriptural sense, in which God may be called "a reconciled God," and when so used, I have no objection to the expression. And yet I freely confess I prefer to speak as the Scripture speaks here of our being reconciled to God, rather than of God being reconciled to us: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

What a glorious flood of light does this throw upon that wondrous scheme of eternal love and superabounding grace whereby God's enemies became God's friends. Let us endeavour to enter into the nature and efficacy of this reconciliation.

1. The first thing that the word *reconciliation* implies is that there was a previous state of friendship, and that this friendship had been broken up, and, as a consequence, been converted into enmity. This, however, we have already seen. It implies also a healing of that breach, a making it up again, and a restoration to the same or greater state of friendship.

Now the first thing necessary was to reconcile *the persons* of these natural enemies of God as having become inimical to God's justice and holiness. Sin had defiled them individually, and personally made them loathsome and abominable. Sin had brought them individually under the stroke of God's justice, so that the demands of a righteous law opened to them the door of hell and shut against them the gate of heaven. Sin also, as a polluted thing, had contaminated them from head to foot, clothed them in filthy garments, so as to render them unclean in body and soul, and, as such, unfit to enter into the pure courts of heavenly bliss.

This is beautifully typified in the forlorn child spoken of in Ezekiel (16.), "cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born." Though a child, and a beloved child, its native filth made its person loathsome. So with Joshua, the High Priest, who was "a brand plucked out of the fire," and yet "stood clothed with filthy garments." Until his iniquity was caused to pass from him, his person was loathsome, on account of his loathsome garments. (Zech. 3.) The persons, then of the people of God needed to be reconciled; and this they were through the atoning blood

of God's dear Son. This made John say, "Unto him that loved us and washed us" that is, our persons, "from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:5.) "And such were some of you; but ye are washed." (Cor. 6:11.)

This reconciliation is for the sins of God's own people through the bloodshedding of his dear Son, and thus an atonement was made for them, that is, a satisfaction to the justice of God which had been, as it were, injured and offended by their transgressions. Thus, there was a reconciliation betwixt the apparent jarring attributes of God, such as his justice and holiness, which would condemn, and his love, mercy and grace, which would save. Sin had caused the breach, sin had produced the enmity; and therefore when by the full satisfaction of Christ, sin was atoned for, put away, blotted out, and cast behind God's back, reconciliation was effected. Now nothing but the infinite wisdom, pure grace, and sovereign power of God could have devised, brought to light, or carried through this way of reconciliation for those who were his born and natural enemies. The first movement was on God's part to us, not on our part towards him.

Reconciliation was in his bosom, not in ours. Mercy was in his heart towards us when we had no mercy upon ourselves nor indeed any sense of our need of it. The whole plan of salvation was devised from eternity in the mind of God and carried out in the incarnation of his dear Son before we here present had birth or being. Thus the whole of the work, from first to last, was devised in the purposes of eternal love and executed by the hands of omnipotent power.

But having seen a little into the meaning of the word "reconciliation," let us endeavour to look at the way in which it was carried into execution. This the apostle declares was effected by the death of God's Son, his true, proper, and eternal Son. This is in full harmony with the whole current of

sacred writ. We therefore read of God "sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10); of "not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32); of his "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24); of his "putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:28); of his "having by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12); of his being "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" of his "bearing the sin of many, and making intercession for the transgressors." Thus by the incarnation, sufferings, and sacrifice of the Son of God and by taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, and in that nature, suffering, bleeding and dying, he reconciled those who were by transgression enemies to God and godliness. Thus also, by his mediation he reconciled all the perfections of God, some of which seem to clash, as his justice and holiness on one side, and his love, mercy, and grace on the other. Justice called for its victims, demanding its just due. Mercy, as pure mercy, apart from justice, would have spared the transgressor, but justice could not give up its rights. And yet the perfections of God must suffer no tarnish or diminution. Each must have its own unsullied, unimpaired lustre. Now the Lord Jesus Christ by his incarnation, mediation, sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death reconciled these apparent jarring attributes of God, and thus made mercy and truth to meet together, righteousness and peace to kiss each other. He put himself into our place, standing under the weight of our transgressions and sins, and thus by exposing his own precious body and soul to the strokes of the sword of God's wrath, he received in his own person the strokes of that wrath due to us. God therefore said by the prophet, "Awake O sword against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 13.) As then he voluntarily undertook to endure in his own Person the wrath against sin which must otherwise have fallen upon us, his

sufferings, bloodshedding, and sacrifice were acceptable to God, a sweet savour that rose up into his nostrils; not that God took delight in the sufferings of his dear Son, as sufferings, but he delighted in the obedience to his will thus manifested, according to the words, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." When, then, he had finished the work which God gave him to do, and had put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciliation was effected and accomplished. It was this of which the angel Gabriel spoke to Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24), all which were effected by the bloodshedding, obedience, and death of the Son of God.

Now there was no other way whereby enemies could be reconciled. It will be our wisdom and mercy to ponder over this solemn truth, and to view it in its various bearings. And first, in what a dreadful state of enmity and alienation must sin have placed us as enemies to God, if we could be reconciled to him by no other means but that his only begotten Son should die for our sins. How awful must those iniquities be which demanded such a bloodshedding and such a death as this! What eternal hatred must God have to sin so to punish it in the Person of the Son of his love; yet, what eternal love must he have to the persons of his elect, to send his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to reconcile them unto himself, and to make them partakers of his own holiness. Could any other way have been devised, that way would have been chosen; but all the wisdom of God could contrive and choose no other. And so far as our faith can embrace the great mystery of godliness, we clearly see that no other way but this could have reconciled the jarring attributes of God. By no other way could the Law have been

fulfilled, or the claims of divine justice satisfied; by no other way could grace have superabounded over the aboundings of sin; by no other way could the wondrous love of God and of his dear Son have been made manifest; and by no other way could the love and obedience of the people of God have been effectually secured.

iv. Now we have to learn these things experimentally for ourselves; and the first lesson usually taught us in the school of Christ, and a most painful lesson it is, is that we, by nature and practice, are enemies to God and godliness. We have to be taught by the blessed Spirit the evil of sin in our own conscience, and to feel the working of enmity against God in our own carnal mind; and thus to learn painfully for ourselves the havoc and ruin that sin has made in and of us. It is a fearful discovery, when first made known to the soul, to find ourselves enemies to God; that as such we are in his hands for life and death; that we have sinned against the Majesty of heaven, and are justly doomed to die; that his law makes no allowance for human infirmity, but exacts its full demands to the utmost penny; that when we look up we see nothing but an angry God, and when we look down see nothing but an opening hell; when we look within find nothing but sin morning, noon, and night; and when we look around us for help, find no help or refuge in man or minister, the church or the world. This is a most painful discovery; yet it opens a way to learn most effectually, because most experimentally, how the sinner is reconciled to God. For the Lord the Spirit in due time enlightens the eyes of the understanding to see the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and obedience of the Son of God; and thus seeing light in God's light, as one enlightened with the light of the living, he discovers that there is a salvation of which he had no previous idea, or at least no spiritual perception. By a ray of divine light he sees that there is a way whereby

he may be reconciled, brought near, accepted, have his sins pardoned, and stand justified and acquitted, so as to be without spot or blemish before the throne of God. With this divine life and light, and as a consequence of it, there is a communicating and a drawing forth of a living faith in the Son of God. The soul is now made willing in the day of God's power; it submits itself, as the apostle speaks, unto the righteousness of God, which is attended with a believing with the heart unto righteousness. (Rom. 10:3-10.) A reconciliation now takes place inwardly in the heart, springing out of the reconciliation already made by the death of God's dear Son. This is a receiving the reconciliation; or, as the apostle speaks, "receiving the atonement." (Rom. 5:11.) The word "atonement" there, means "reconciliation," as rendered in the margin, and indeed is the same term as is translated "reconciliation" in the text. This "receiving the atonement" is to receive it in faith, hope, and love into a believing and broken heart. It is a being willing to be saved, not in our own way but in God's way; approving of and delighting in the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and death of the Son of God, as revealed in the Scriptures and received into an enlightened understanding, a purged conscience, and a loving, humble, penitent spirit, the mouth confessing what the heart believes, and praising and blessing God for his manifested mercy. But short of this sweet assurance and filial confidence, there is also a receiving the atonement as suitable and desirable, attended with an inward testimony that if this is the way of salvation there is hope for me. With this there is a view of the beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ as a suffering Immanuel, and a looking unto him as those who were bitten by serpents in the wilderness looked to the brazen serpent and were healed. There is also connected with this believing view of Jesus, a receiving into the heart the precious promises that hold forth salvation to those who look to him,

according to his own words, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." And as love crowns the whole, and is the surest evidence of the new birth, there is a flowing forth of love and affection towards this bleeding Lamb of God, this man of sorrows, this suffering Saviour; an embracing of him and a cleaving to him with full purpose of heart, as all our hope and help, all our salvation and, all our desire.

v. We see, therefore, that "reconciliation" wears two aspects, and has two different relationships. One is external, the other internal. As a past act of satisfaction to the justice of God, it was once and for ever fully effected by the bloodshedding and death of God's dear Son. This work is complete. Nothing can be taken away from it, nothing added to it. But there is a receiving this atonement into the heart, the effect of which is to reconcile the understanding by a divine light, to reconcile the conscience by the application of the blood of sprinkling, and to reconcile the affections by fixing them on the glorious Person of the Son of God as now at the right hand of the Father. As, then, this inward reconciliation takes place, there is a subduing of the ancient enmity, rebellion, and working of hard, obstinate thoughts and feelings against the Majesty of heaven, and a communication of meekness, humility, contrition, godly sorrow for sin, and love to the Lord and his people. Here is the peculiar blessedness of the gospel as it becomes the "power of God unto salvation;" and here we see the contrast between it and the law. The law reveals the wrath of God against sin, discovers the evils of the heart, but gives no remedy for them; lays bare the iniquity of every secret thought, but holds out no prospect of escape from the wrath to come. But the gospel comes in demonstration of the Spirit and power. It addresses us as a message from God, speaking by authority in his name, and says, "You are an enemy to God by wicked works; you are a sinner in thought,



word, and deed; everything in you is opposed to the justice, holiness, and majesty of God. But there is salvation for poor sinners such as you, through the blood of Christ." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.). "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." (1 John 5:11.) "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 1:1, 2.) It thus assures us that he has reconciled enemies to God; has put away their sins by his own bloodshedding upon the cross. And now having gone up on high, and sent his Spirit into the heart of his servants to preach the gospel of his grace, he speaks by them encouraging words to poor sinners, that they might come to him and find in him rest and peace; still saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The gospel comes with these declarations, promises, and invitations, that there is salvation through Christ and no other. Now as "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," when the gospel comes with power, faith is raised up to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to look unto him for salvation, to hope in his mercy; and as the gracious Lord is pleased to draw near in the manifestation of his blood and love, and to whisper some sweet promise into the heart, the enmity that was stirred up by the law against God with the rebellion, unbelief, prejudice, and self-righteousness, which had hitherto stood up as invincible obstacles in the way of believing, at the voice of mercy melt, break up, and disappear out of sight like the ice before the sun, and faith, hope, and love take their place. It is in this way that the soul is reconciled unto God, as the apostle speaks, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God;" that is, internally and experimentally, because it now receives the atonement, embracing the

reconciliation effected by the death of God's dear Son. The word "atone," means "to make at one," that is, at one with God; and therefore to receive the atonement, is to receive the "atonement" of the way whereby God and man become "at one," or as one, in Christ.

Now have you ever felt these two things that must be experimentally known by every saint of God—enmity and reconciliation; your lost state by nature, and your salvation by grace; the fall and the recovery; the malady and the remedy; the wounding and the healing; that you have nothing in yourself but sin and misery; that you deserve the lowest hell; that in you there is neither hope nor help; and that if you live and die without a knowledge of Christ, you must sink into hell with all your sins upon your head? And yet there has been that manifestation to your soul of the Person and work, blood and righteousness, grace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, which has not only enlightened your understanding but delighted your heart. Or if you cannot rise up into the power of a full confidence, yet that you have seen that sweet suitability, that beauty and blessedness in the Lord Jesus Christ, which have raised up in your soul a living faith in him, shed abroad a love to his name, and given you a good hope through grace. If you can find this, you will be able to trace such a change in your heart and affections, that though you once were an enemy to God by wicked works, yet there is a reconciliation in your mind to his way, word, and will, a subduing of your unbelief, and a longing for a fuller and clearer testimony to your pardon and acceptance. If so, you are no longer an enemy, but a friend; no longer an alien from God, but one of his own dear family, even though you cannot claim the full enjoyment of the relationship, or cry, "Abba, Father."

II.—But we pass on to the declaration from the mouth of an

inspired apostle, *the salvation of friends*.

i. The apostle says, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be *saved* by his life." Then they are already reconciled, for reconciliation is a past act: effected by the bloodshedding of Christ upon the cross, once for all, and cannot be repeated. When he shed his atoning blood as a sacrifice for sin, and laid down his precious life as a ransom price, reconciliation was then thoroughly effected. It is a finished work, and was so proclaimed by his dying lips. The church was then reconciled to God, and in a sense God reconciled to her; for though God ever loved the Church as in union with his dear Son, there was a law-enmity which needed to be removed, and an anger against sin which required to be appeased. We may illustrate this by the case of David and Absalom. David loved Absalom and never ceased to love him, but he was justly displeased with his crime in slaying Amnon. But he was reconciled to him when Absalom submitted himself, and kissed him as a proof of it. (2 Sam. 14:33.) So God was justly displeased with the sins of his people; but his righteous anger was appeased by the obedience unto death of his dear Son, and in this sense he became reconciled.

Now, as I have already explained, when we receive the atonement thus effected, and feel its power in our souls; when our conscience is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ; when his love is shed abroad in the heart, and faith is raised up to embrace him as the Christ of God, then we are experimentally reconciled; then we are drawn near to God through the blood of Jesus Christ, and embrace him as our Father and Friend. But the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead; he triumphed over death and hell; he ascended to the right hand of the Father, and there sits as the great High Priest over the house of God, as the Mediator between God

and man. As the apostle says, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Now this is the benefit and blessing of Christ being at the right hand of the Father, that he lives to carry out and execute his own testament—that new testament or covenant of which he spoke at the last supper, "The cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20); or, as we read in Matthew, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28.) You may make a will and die, leaving your property as you think secured and guarded by the strictest regulations. But can you guarantee that your executors will carry out your injunctions? Your property, when realised, may not be sufficient to pay your legacies; your trustees or executors may decline to act, or they may be fraudulent men, and your children and relatives may be cheated by them of their due rights, as has occurred over and over again. Or there may be some flaw or defect in your will as being improperly signed, or making a provision which the law does not allow; and thus all your death-bed intentions may be thoroughly frustrated. But how different it is with the New Testament or will of the Lord Jesus Christ. He made his own will, which he signed and sealed with his own blood, thus giving it eternal value and validity. And O how blessed the truth that he has risen to the right hand of God to be his own executor; so that he himself executes all the provisions of his will. This blessed truth is contained in the words, *"we are saved by his life."*

ii. Now if you know anything of yourself inwardly and experimentally of the evils of your heart, the power of sin, the strength of temptation, the subtlety of your unwearied foe, and the daily conflict betwixt nature and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven, you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. Think not that the only salvation to be felt and

known is salvation past—salvation accomplished by the bloodshedding and death of the Son of God. There is salvation present—an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fulness of Christ as a risen Mediator. Don't you want to be daily and almost hourly saved? But from what? Why, from everything in you that fights against the will and word of God. Sin is not dead in you. If you are reconciled and brought near to God; if you have an interest in the precious blood of Christ; if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and heaven be your eternal home, that does not deliver you from the indwelling of sin, nor from the power of sin either, except as grace gives you present deliverance from it. Sin still works in your carnal mind, and will work in it till your dying hour. What then you want to be saved from is the guilt, filth, power, love, and practice of that sin which ever dwells and ever works in you, and often brings your soul into hard and cruel bondage. Now Christ lives at the right hand of God for his dear people that he may be ever saving them by his life. There he reigns and rules as their glorious covenant Head, ever watching over, feeling for and sympathising with them, and communicating supplies of grace for the deliverance and consolation for all his suffering saints spread over the face of the earth. The glorious Head is in heaven, but the suffering members upon earth; and as he lives on their behalf, he maintains by his Spirit and grace his life in their soul, according to his own words, "Because I live ye shall live also."

It is by this life that, in the words of our text, we are "saved;" not that salvation is not already complete; not that anything remains for Christ in heaven to do, to make up that which was left undone in his work of redemption here below. That is not the meaning of the words. It is, so to speak, the handing down of that already accomplished salvation into our hearts—the ratifying of it in the court of conscience, the

sealing of it with a divine power and influence upon the heart. We therefore read: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Ephes. 4:8.) In fact, upon the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ hangs all the salvation of the church; for without it, redemption could not have been made effectual. The salvation, therefore, spoken of in our text is an experimental salvation, in a gracious communication of that divine light, life, and power which spring out of it. Now in order to realise this we need a life of faith—the life of which Paul speaks: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) And this life of faith in Christ is as necessary to our present and experimental salvation as his death upon the cross was to our past and actual salvation. If you are alive to what you are as a poor, fallen sinner, you see yourself surrounded by enemies, temptations, sins, and snares; and you feel yourself utterly defenceless, as weak as water, without any strength to stand against them. Pressed down by the weight of unbelief, you see a mountain of difficulty before your eyes, sometimes in providence, sometimes in grace; sometimes as regards yourself, sometimes as regards others. You find too, that your heart is a cage of unclean birds, and that in you, that is, in your flesh there dwelleth no good thing; neither will nor power have you in yourself to fight or flee. How then shall this mountain become a plain? How shall you escape the snares and temptations spread in your path? How shall you get the better of all your enemies, external, internal, infernal, and reach heaven's gates safe at last? If you say, "By the salvation already accomplished," are you sure that that salvation belongs to you? Where is the evidence of it if you have no present faith in Christ? How can that past salvation profit you for present troubles unless there be an application of it? It is this application and manifestation of salvation which is being "saved by his life."

See how it works; and what a suitability is in it. You are all weakness, and he is and has all strength, which he makes perfect in your weakness. So Paul found it, which made him "glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him." You are all helplessness against sin, temptation, and a thousand foes. But help is laid upon him as one that is mighty; he therefore sends you help from the sanctuary and strengthens you out of Zion (Psalm 20:2), that these sins and enemies may not get the better over you. You often feel yourself cold, lifeless, and dead, and therefore need continual supplies of grace and strength to revive your soul, to make you believing, watchful, and prayerful. The Lord Jesus Christ, who lives at God's right hand, has to send down supplies of his grace continually to keep your soul alive unto himself. Without this life being kept up and maintained by these continual supplies of his grace, you cannot pray, or read, or hear the word, or meditate with any feeling or profit. You cannot love the Lord and his blessed ways; you cannot submit to his righteous dealings; or bear the rod and him who appointed it. You may approach his throne, but your heart is cold, clouded, and unfeeling; your spirit sinks under the weight and burden of the trials and difficulties that are spread in your path; nor are you able to do anything that satisfies yourself, or that you think can satisfy God. By these painful and profitable lessons you are experimentally taught that you want the life of Christ as well as the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, as much as the crucifixion of Christ; Christ as an ever living, ever gracious, ever glorious Mediator, to send down supplies of his love and power into your soul, as much as you needed him to die upon the cross for your redemption. We therefore read, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25), that is, that there might be an application in his risen life of his righteousness that we might be not only pardoned, but experimentally justified in the court of a

believing heart and a purged conscience.

iii. Here then is the life of faith that a believer lives upon the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. He comes to the cross to receive pardon of his sins through the sacrifice and death of Jesus; there to find peace with God by believing in his Son; there to have reconciliation by seeing his sins cast behind God's back, and receive mercy into his soul as flowing through the atoning blood of the God-Man. But he has to walk through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought (Deut. 8:15); where he is surrounded with temptations and snares, his own evil heart being his worst foe. How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness unless he has a Friend at the right hand of God to send him continual supplies of grace; who can hear his prayers, answer his petitions, listen to his sighs, and put his tears into his bottle; who can help him to see the snares, and give him grace to avoid them; who descries from his heavenly watch tower the rising of evil in his heart, and can put a timely and seasonable check upon it before it burst into word or action? Does he not need an all-wise and ever-living Friend who can save him from pride by giving him true humility; save him from hardness of heart by bestowing repentance; save him from carelessness by making his conscience tender; save him from all his fears by whispering into his soul, "Fear not, I have redeemed thee;" and save him from a thousand deaths in fear or feeling by supplies of a hidden life? So that the life of a Christian is to be continually looking to the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, to revive his soul when drooping, to manifest his love to his heart when cold and unfeeling, to sprinkle his conscience with his blood when guilty and sinking, to lead him into truth, keep him from error and evil, preserve him through and amid every storm, guide every step that he takes in his onward journey, and eventually bring him safe to heaven.



Thus there is a reconciliation of enemies by the death of Christ, and a saving of friends by the life of Christ; and we must know both. We are reconciled as enemies, not as friends; for friends need no reconciliation. Reconciliation in and from a state of enmity against God is the very first thing we have to learn by divine teaching. Here it is we come to see salvation through the blood of Christ; and this makes us cast away all our own righteousness as filthy rags, and have no hope nor help but in the cross of Jesus Christ. That is the first thing we have to learn; for until we have learnt our first lesson, we cannot learn our second. But we are very slow learners. Unbelief and infidelity, pride and self-righteousness, guilt and despondency, all conspire to prevent us effectually learning it thoroughly, and as it were finally. Again and again then have we to recommence our first lesson, that we are sinners saved by the pure mercy of God, through the bloodshedding of Christ—enemies reconciled and brought near by the death of the Son of God. You, who are burdened by your sins; you, who feel the enmity of your heart; who would be reconciled and brought near to God, who desire nothing so much as to feel the love of God shed abroad in your soul; who want to experience the pardon of your sins and have a manifestation that you have an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ; to you, even to you, is the word of this salvation sent. And come you must, and come you will, with all your sins and transgressions, however black they may be, and lay them down, so to speak, at the foot of the cross; you must and will look with believing eyes to the crucified Son of God, and look and look, till he speak a word of peace, pardon, and consolation to your soul, through his bleeding wounds and suffering death. And then, when you have been thus reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and his precious blood has been sprinkled upon your conscience, making you a friend of God, you will have to live a life of faith and prayer upon him as a risen Mediator, as a gracious

and glorious Head of influence, and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father. To him you will have to come day by day with your sins and sorrows, your mournings and lamentations over your repeated and aggravated backslidings, your numerous, yea innumerable infirmities and short comings; and thus make him your best, may I add, your confidential Friend; for he is "a friend that sticketh closer than any earthly brother." In this way, by confessing your sins, and by faith in his name, you will receive communications of his grace, mercy, and love into your heart, so as to save you from the love and spirit of the world, from error, from the power and strength of your own lusts, and the base inclinations of your fallen nature. These will often work at a fearful rate; but this will only make you feel more your need of the power and presence of the Lord Jesus to save you from them all.

Now it is an experience of these inward exercises and of the power and presence of the Lord in and under them which makes real religion such a living thing in a man's bosom. A man, taught of God, will not and must not say, "All my sins were freely forgiven and blotted out by Christ's bloodshedding and death upon the cross. Then and there I was reconciled to God. I have now nothing more to do with sin, nor sin with me." This is to pervert and abuse a blessed gospel truth. You have still a great deal to do with sin, and sin has still a great deal to do with you; for it dwelleth in you, and will work, and that sometimes at an awful rate. And you will find, if your heart be right with God, that you will have many trials and temptations, conflicts and sorrows to bear; many battles to fight, and, I may add, victories to gain. You are a poor, defenceless sheep, surrounded by wolves, and, as such, need all the care and defence of the good Shepherd. You are a ship in a stormy sea, where winds and waves are all contrary, and therefore need an all-wise and able pilot to

take you safe into harbour. It is in this way that we learn that "we are saved by Christ's life."

iv. And do bear in mind the words "much more;" for how they show the fulness and certainty of this salvation: "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." It is as if the apostle would say, "The greatest, the hardest, the most difficult part of the work is already done; and if the main task has been accomplished in the reconciliation of enemies, how much easier, so to speak, must be the salvation of friends. Thus there is the fullest assurance that all who were reconciled shall be saved; for if a dying Christ reconciled them, a living Christ will save them. O to feel the power of this death and this life—this death to reconcile, this life to save! And how an experimental knowledge of this death and this life opens up heavenly communications between Christ and the soul; makes religion a living reality; causes the Bible to shine forth as a book filled with ever new and ever glorious truths. How too a living experience of this kind separates from the world, and from everything which intervenes between Christ and the soul. If your feet are in this blessed path there is no difficulty that you can meet with beyond the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to overcome; no temptation can attack you, no trial await you, no enemy assault you which he cannot defeat. Nor is there a single thing on earth or in hell which can harm you if you are only looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, and deriving supplies of grace and strength out of him. This reconciliation and this salvation thousands have proved; and why not you? With this parting question, in the hope you may take it home to your own breast and find the answer manifested there, I shall leave the subject before us in the hands of the blessed Spirit to do with it what seemeth good in his sight; and if he attend it with the unction of his grace, all praise and glory be ascribed to a Triune God, Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit now and evermore.

Amen.