

The Destruction through Death of Him Who Had the Power of Death

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"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15

No man has ever sounded the depths of the fall. The saints of God have indeed discoveries of the evil of sin; the fountains of the great deep have been in a measure broken up in their heart; and they have such views at times of the desperate wickedness and awful depravity of human nature, that they seem as if filled with unspeakable horror at the hideous enormity of the corruption that works in their carnal mind. But no man has ever seen, as no man ever can see, in this time state, what sin is to its full extent, and as it will be hereafter developed in the depths of hell. We may indeed in our own experience see something of its commencement; but we can form little idea of its progress, and still less of its termination; for it has this peculiar feature attending it, that it ever spreads and spreads till it involves everything that it touches in utter ruin. We may compare it in this point of view to the venom fang of a serpent. There are serpents of so venomous a kind, as for instance the Cobra de Capello, or hooded snake, that the introduction of the minutest portion of venom from their poison tooth will in a few hours convert all the fluids and solids of the body into a mass of putrefaction. A man shall be in perfect health one hour, and bitten by this serpent's tooth shall in the next be a loathsome

mass of rottenness and corruption. Such is sin. The introduction of sin into the nature of Adam at the fall was like the introduction of poison from the fang of a deadly serpent into the human body. It at once penetrated into his soul and body, and filled both with death and corruption. Was not this God's own solemn warning to him beforehand? "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17.) What was this death thus denounced? Not actual death by separation of body and soul, for Adam lived more than 900 years after this, but mortal death, spiritual death, that is the death of the soul, and in the end natural death, that is the death of the body. Or, to use a more scriptural figure, sin may be compared to the disease of leprosy, which usually began with a "bright spot," or "rising in the skin" (Lev. 13:2), scarcely perceptible, and yet spread and spread until it enveloped every member, and limb dropped from limb, the whole body becoming a mass of putrefying hideous corruption. Or it may be compared to a cancer, which begins perhaps with a little lump causing a slight itching, but goes on feeding upon the part which it attacks, until the patient dies worn out with pain and suffering. Now if sin be this venom fang, this spreading leprosy, this loathsome cancer; if its destructive power be so great that, unless arrested and healed, it will destroy body and soul alike in hell, the remedy for it, if remedy there be, must be as great as the malady. This seems very plain. No one thinks of a little cure for a Cobra's bite, a little cure for a leprosy, a little cure for a cancer, a little cure for consumption. If cure there be for these destructive maladies, it must be so great as to be in our eyes little less than miraculous. A partial cure, a half cure, a temporary cure is none; for in these virulent cases the disease will break forth again with redoubled violence. Thus if there be a cure for sin, a remedy for the fall, a deliverance from the wrath to come, it must be at least as full and as complete as the ruin which sin has entailed upon

us. Less than this will be of no avail; for if any part, shred, or root of the old malady be left; if all sin be not completely pardoned, and at death its very being removed, what would be left might, so to speak, break forth in heaven, and be more fatal than Adam's fall in Paradise. We must lay this down, therefore, as a foundation point that if the work of redemption effected by the Son of God be not as complete as the sin from which he came to save, it would be as regards us utterly valueless.

Now this same point which is true in doctrine is true also in experience. As sin and salvation meet together in the one, each illustrating and opening its opposite, so views of sin and salvation meet together in the other in a similar kind of reflection. The two things therefore correspond experimentally as well as doctrinally. The man who has slight, superficial views and feelings of sin will have equally slight and superficial views of the atonement made for sin. The groans of Christ will never sound in his ears as the dolorous groans of an agonising Lord; the sufferings of Christ will never be opened up to his soul as the sorrows of Immanuel, God with us; the blood of Christ will never be viewed by him, at least not in his present state, as the bloodshedding of the darling Son of God; and the obedience of Christ will have no value in his eyes as the subjection and submission to ignominy and death of him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person. What God may do for him I cannot say. I merely take him as he now is. And I assert that whilst he has such slight, superficial views of the malady, his views of the remedy will be equally slight and superficial. But the man in whose heart and conscience the Holy Ghost opens up deep discoveries of sin, to show him and make him feel how utterly ruined he is by nature and practice in the sight of a holy God, will be taught by the same Spirit in due time the completeness of

the remedy; and that divine Teacher in revealing Christ to him will give him very different views of his Person and work from those which he has whose views of sin are slight and superficial. He will have in greater or less measure, according to the depth and power of divine manifestation, views of Christ in the garden and upon the cross, as suffering in shame and agony under a load of sin; he will have sooner or later some application of his precious atoning blood to his conscience to relieve him from the guilt of sin; and he will have strength communicated from the fulness of Christ to liberate him from the power and dominion of sin. Thus one much depends upon, and much corresponds with the other; for though we cannot lay down any fixed standard or insist upon any precise rule of Christian experience, yet we may take it as a general truth that as we are led down into a spiritual knowledge of self, so we are led up into a gracious knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have before us in the text a sweet and blessed description of the work which Jesus came to accomplish. We are told in it that "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." The reason is also given for this wondrous act of condescension, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

In endeavouring, with God's help and blessing, to unfold the mind and meaning of the Spirit in these words, I shall,

I.—*First*, show who "*the children*" are, and how they are "*partakers of flesh and blood.*"

II.—*Secondly*, that the Lord Jesus Christ himself likewise

"took part of the same."

III.—*Thirdly*, the *reasons* why he took the flesh and blood of the children: "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

I.—"The children," in our text, are the children spoken of in the preceding verse, where Paul quotes the language of the Holy Ghost in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." (Isaiah 8:18.) These words the apostle explains as uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ; and thus vividly represents him as standing before the throne of his heavenly Father, and saying unto him, as their head and Representative, as he held them fast in his eternal embrace, "Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me." We may therefore look upon these words of the Lord Jesus not only as descriptive of the relationship between him and the "many sons" whom he will bring "unto glory" (Heb. 2:10), but we may carry them forward as the utterance of his heart and lips in that great day when he will present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. For then will he be able to say in the fullest sense of the words, as if he would personally appeal to the omniscient eye of his heavenly Father, "Behold!" Look and see. Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." And now "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:6, 12, 24.)

From this passage then of the prophet Isaiah, in which the Holy Ghost calls the redeemed people of God "children," the

apostle draws the conclusion that those whom the Father gave unto the Son to be redeemed by him were by God's own testimony "children" with Christ. As then the Lord Jesus places himself amongst them as being one with them, "Behold, I and the children," he argues in his usually cogent way, that as "the children were partakers of flesh and blood," there was a necessity that the Lord of life and glory, the Mediator between God and man, should himself "likewise take part of the same;" or he could not have said, as if putting himself amongst them, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me."

To understand the arguments of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or indeed Paul's mode of reasoning generally, we must bear in mind that he does not seek to prove his points from any natural, logical, or intellectual considerations, or what he calls elsewhere "the wisdom of men" (1 Cor. 2:5), but from the Old Testament Scriptures, assuming as a fundamental principle that they are the express word of God. As therefore God himself speaks in them, he draws from them all his conclusions. This we are told was his manner. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging," &c. (Acts 17:2, 3.) Thus we see in this epistle how he reasons out of the scriptures, opening their divine and spiritual meaning, and alleging proofs from them. We see, for instance, how he argues from the text: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec;" how he takes, as it were, the text to pieces, and draws conclusions from almost every word of it. And it is observable how he will build up a whole structure of truth upon a few words of the Old Testament scriptures, or even upon one. It is the case with the passage before us. What conclusions he draws from the simple word "children." How it leads him into the union between Christ and the church; and how he shows from it

the necessity of the incarnation, sufferings, sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death of the Lord Jesus. As then the word "children" contains in it such a depth of heavenly truth, let us examine its meaning a little more closely by the light of the scriptures.

i. And first *why* and *how* are they children? The answer to this is as brief as it is simple. They are children because God is their Father. But how came God to be their Father? The answer to this inquiry leads us back, and leads us up; back into eternity, up into the councils of heaven.

1. First, then, they are the sons of God, because they have an *eternal union* with him who, in his divine nature, is the Son of God. They are therefore declared to have been "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," and in that choice to have been "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto God." (Eph. 1:4, 5.) We thus see that the actual and original ground of their adoption to be children was not founded upon redemption, but upon Christ's being the eternal Son of God, and their union with him as such. If Christ had not been a Son, they could not have been sons; but as he the Head is a Son, they as members are sons, with this difference, that he is a Son by nature, they sons by adoption; he a Son by personal subsistence in the Godhead, they by union with him; he by virtue of his own right, they by virtue of his grace.

2. But they are "children" also by Christ's *espousing their persons* as the gift of the Father, and thus becoming their Head and Husband. By this act of the Son they became more openly and manifestly, as if before the face of heaven, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. It was an open sealing of the compact between the Father and the Son, when he could say, "All mine are thine and thine are mine."

(John 17:10.) The Bride is therefore called "the King's daughter," and is addressed by the Father as such. "Hearken, daughter"—the Father's daughter as being the Son's spouse. (Psa. 45:10, 13.) The Lord Jesus therefore said to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, "Go to my brethren, and say, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (John 20:17.)

3. They are "children" also by *regeneration*, as John tells us: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:11, 12.) Being "born of God," they become sons of God by a spiritual birth, and they thus are "put among the children" (Jer. 3:19), not only in purpose but by power, not only by decree before time but by its accomplishment in time, not only in the mind of God but openly before men.

4. And lastly, they are children by being "*led by the Spirit of God*," and receiving "*the Spirit of adoption* whereby they cry Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:14, 15.)

Thus they are "children" by their predestination by the Father, "children" by their marriage union with the Son, and "children" by their regeneration by the Holy Ghost—each Person of the Trinity adopting and owning them as sons of God. And the day will come when they will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13:43.)

ii. But these children are, according to the words of our text, "partakers of flesh and blood."

What are we to understand by this expression? I believe simply this, that humanity is their present condition. You will observe that the apostle had been speaking before a good

deal respecting angels, and, in quoting Psalm 8, had shown from it how Jesus "was made a little lower than the angels." This leads him, as pursuing the same subject, to draw a distinction between the nature of man and the nature of angels. The children then whom Christ came to redeem are here said to be "partakers of flesh and blood," and are thus distinguished from angels who are not flesh and blood, but possess a peculiar nature of their own. But this angelic nature Jesus passed by. Angels sinned and fell. The Son of God did not take upon him angelic nature to redeem angels. They were abandoned to their fallen condition; left in their sins; left to blaspheme the name of God; to be enemies of God and godliness whilst this world lasts, and then to be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for them. (Matt. 25:41.) Why, we know not. These are deep mysteries which we must not scrutinise; for secret things belong to the Lord, but the things revealed belong to us and our children. Sufficient for us it is to know that God had purposes of love to man; sufficient for us it is that as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, there was a necessity that Jesus should take part of the same. By "flesh and blood" we are to understand the whole of humanity, and especially humanity in its present condition. Now this humanity consists in the possession of an immortal soul and a fleshly body; and these united together in a way which we cannot explain and yet daily feel. No man can tell how his soul is joined to his body, and yet he has every moment an internal consciousness that such a union does exist. When I speak, it is with and by my body. My lips move; my tongue combines with my lips to utter words which as intelligible sounds reach your ear. But it is my soul which thinks before the words come out of my mouth, and it is your soul which understands what your bodily ear receives. It is my bodily eye that sees objects, but there is a soul behind the eye that from those objects thus seen frames perceptions, and converts those perceptions into ideas. My

hand can grasp whatever the fingers embrace, but there is something beyond the fingers that tells me what the object is around which my fingers close, and which converts that sensation into perception, knowledge, understanding. Thus though we cannot understand how the soul is united so closely to the body, yet we all have an internal consciousness that there is a union between them, which we can feel better than we can explain. And when this soul of ours is quickened from above; when it begins to live a life of faith and prayer, a life of joy and sorrow, a life which has its element in the things which are not seen, a life of union and communion with the Father and the Son, through the power of the Holy Ghost, then we have, so to speak, a double consciousness that we have a soul, and that this soul, though distinct from the body, is at present intimately united with it.

II.—When, therefore, the Lord Jesus came to redeem the children from the depths of sin and guilt into which they had fallen; when he came on his blessed errand from heaven to earth to save his beloved Bride by shedding his own precious blood upon the cross for her, there was a necessity that he should *partake of her flesh and blood*. According to the argument of the apostle, redemption could only be accomplished by the assumption of the nature of the redeemed. If then the Son of God had undertaken to redeem the fallen angels, he must have taken angelic nature. This certainly is the meaning of the passage, where it says: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." As then he came to redeem human beings, he must necessarily take upon him flesh and blood, that in the nature which sinned, though not in the sin of that nature, he might suffer, and by offering up his body and soul as a sacrifice might put away the sins of the children, whose nature he assumed, reconcile them to God, and save them in himself with an everlasting salvation.

You will observe that those whom he came to redeem were "the children;" and that these children as a part of the human race are "partakers of flesh and blood," that is, they have a common nature with all other men. Jesus, therefore, "took part of the same"—a holy, sanctified part of it into union with his own divine Person. Thus he took part of our nature, but not of its sin. He had, as we have, a human soul; he had, as we have, a human body; but he had not, as we have, a sinful soul, nor had he, as we have, a mortal body; that is, a body which *must* die; a body in which there were naturally the seeds of death and corruption. He took a body which *could* die, for that was the purpose for which he came, but not a body that *must* die, for he died only by a voluntary act, as he himself said: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17, 18.) He had too a human soul, though perfectly pure; for did he not say, "My *soul* is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death?" (Matt. 26:38.) And this soul was offered a sacrifice as well as his body. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." (Isa. 53:10.) This poor human soul travailed with unutterable sorrow in the garden and on the cross; for the promise was that he should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" and this soul "he poured out unto death" of his own will when he was numbered with the transgressors. (Isa. 53:11, 12.) Thus the humanity of our blessed Lord was actual flesh and blood from the moment of its conception, a perfect human body, to which was united a perfect human soul; both without sin, or else he could not be the Lamb without blemish; both without sin, or his pure humanity would not have been that "holy thing" born of the Virgin, which should be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35.) Thus he

came forth as the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. He came into the world a partaker of flesh and blood, though not as we of sinful flesh and blood; partaker of humanity, but not of fallen humanity; partaker of a body, but not of a mortal body; of a soul, but not of a sinful soul; a real man like ourselves, but not a fallen man, nor a sinful man, nor a man that could, by any possibility, in thought, word, or deed, commit the least fault, or be guilty of the least failing. Well indeed might the apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Here as in a glass we see the wonderful love of Jesus, that he who is the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, a sharer of the Father's essence, of the Father's glory, should stoop so low to lift us up so high; that he should condescend to unite to his glorious Person our nature, flesh and blood—to wear a human body like our own; to feel as we do, to speak as we do, to walk as we do, to eat and drink, and hunger and thirst, and weep and sigh, and mourn as we do; yet all the while be the Son of God, and should have a divine nature in as close union with human nature as our soul has with our bodily frame. We cannot tell how our soul is in union with our body. We know it is so, but how we cannot tell. We only know the fact, but we cannot explain the mode. So we cannot tell how Christ's divine nature is in union with his human nature; we know it is so by the testimony of God, by the express revelation of his word. That revelation to a believer answers all inquiry. But if any man say to me, "Can you explain the mystery of the two natures in Christ?" I ask in my turn, "Can you explain the mystery of your own existence? Can you explain to me how you are able to lift up your own hand, see with your own eye, hear with your own ear, move with your own foot? No man has ever yet been able to explain this apparently simple thing—a feat which every child can perform, but a fact which no philosopher can understand. Can you tell me how mind can act upon matter?"

how you wish to do a thing with your mind, and can do it instantaneously with your body?" When, then, you can explain your own existence and unravel the mystery of your soul acting in union with your body, then I will allow that you may unravel the mystery of the union of Deity and humanity in the Person of the Son of God, as he lived upon earth, and as he now lives in heaven. Beautiful upon this mystery are the words of Hart:

"How 'twas done we can't discuss;
But this we know, 'twas done for us."

Happy those who can use the words without a wavering tongue! This is the answer which effectually stops all further inquiry as to the why and the wherefore; this at once solves the enigma by casting upon it the light of infinite wisdom and unspeakable mercy; whilst we reverently adore what we cannot understand. For it is a mystery which can be received only by faith. To the Jews it was a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. When, then, we can believe that the Son of God took part of our flesh and blood out of love and compassion for our souls; that there being no other way which even heaven itself could devise, no other means that the wisdom of God could contrive whereby sinners could be saved, but by the death of the cross, then the mystery shines forth with unspeakable lustre and glory. The shame, the ignominy, what the Apostle calls the "weakness" and "foolishness" of the cross disappear, swallowed up in a flood of surpassing grace; and faith views it as a glorious scheme of God's own devising, and of the Son of God's approving and accomplishing. Viewed in this light how glorious it appears, that by suffering in our nature all the penalties of our sin, Jesus should redeem us from the lowest hell and raise us up to the highest heaven. How full of

unspeakable wisdom was that plan whereby he united God and man by himself becoming God-Man; empowering poor worms of earth to soar above the skies and live for ever in the presence of him who is a consuming fire. How glorious is that scheme whereby reconciling aliens and enemies unto his heavenly Father, he summons them when death cuts their mortal thread to mount up into an eternity of bliss, there to view face to face the great and glorious I AM; to be for ever enwrapped in the blaze of Deity and ever folded in the arms of a Triune God. It is this blessed end, this reward of the Redeemer's sufferings bloodshedding and death, which lifts our view beyond the depths of the fall and the misery of sin, as we see and feel it in this miserable world. It is this view by faith of the glory which shall be revealed which enables us to see what wisdom and mercy were in the heart of God when he permitted the Adam fall to take place. It is as if we could see the glory of God breaking forth through it in all the splendour of atoning blood and dying love, securing to guilty man the joys of salvation, and bringing to God an eternal revenue of praise.

III.—But the Holy Ghost, in the words of the text, gives us two reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ took part of the flesh and blood of the children. First, "*that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*" secondly, that "*he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*" We will consider these two reasons separately.

i. As the author of man's sin by tempting him to disobey the express commandment of God, Satan may be said to be the author of man's misery. That infernal fiend who had fallen from heaven through pride, and whose heart ever gnawed him with agony and pain at the remembrance of past happiness, the experience of present woe, and the

contemplation of future torment, could only find some relief from his sufferings by inflicting, as far as he was permitted, similar sufferings on others. Man, therefore, as the last and best creation of God; man, as made in the image and after the likeness of his divine Creator, became the object of his infernal attack. O the cruelty of Satan! O his hatred and enmity against God and against all on whom God had set his approving stamp to mar God's fair creation and thwart his benevolent purposes. When then he viewed the first human pair in the garden and saw them in all their innocence and happiness as God created them; when he beheld how the Lord God came down to converse with them in the cool of the day, wrath and enmity boiled in his heart, and he was determined, infernal fiend as he was, to break in upon that happiness, and to mar that calm, quiet, and holy Paradise. By the permission of God, for without it no such infernal plot could have borne fruit, he succeeded, and by tempting the woman, and through her tempting the man, and thus casting man and woman both down into actual transgression, he

"Brought death into the world and all our woe."

He is therefore said here "to have the power of death;" because it was through him that death came, gaining entrance only by sin, as the Apostle intimates: "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that ["in whom," margin] all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.) Satan therefore held, so to speak, the power of death in his hands. When he tempted our first parents to sin in the garden of Eden, he held death in his hands; though, if I may use the expression, he kept one hand behind his back, whilst with the other he pointed to the forbidden fruit. With a lie in his mouth, he said unto the woman: "Ye shall not surely die." He tempted her by the lust of the eyes, as the fruit was "pleasant to look at;" by the lust

of the appetite, as "good for food;" by the lust of the understanding as "a tree to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6); but held death in his hand when he pointed to it and presented all these attractions. For in the same moment that God's commandment was broken, the forbidden fruit lusted after, handled, and tasted, immediately death entered in, and with this entrance of death, Satan at once took into his hands, by divine permission, the power of death.

ii. But let us now look at the meaning of the expression "*the power of death.*" It seems to have the following meanings.

1. He who had power to introduce sin had *power to bring in death also*. Satan's power over men is through sin; for except for sin he would be utterly powerless. Our Lord therefore could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." In his presence Satan was powerless, because he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." As then Satan has power through sin, and as the penalties as well as the wages of sin is death, so he has power over death.

2. But secondly, he has power over death as being the *prince and god of this world*. (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4.) As then the world is under the guilt and power of sin and death, and by them Satan reigns and rules, and maintains his authority and dominion, he holds in his hands the power of death, and especially of what is often called moral death, or, to use a more scriptural term, death in trespasses and sins.

3. He also has the power of natural death, as *terrifying* and *frightening* men's consciences and agitating them with continual alarm, driving some to desperation and others to suicide.

4. And lastly, he may be said also to have the power of death as being the *Executioner of the second death* upon impenitent sinners to all eternity. Is not this last the main reason, for the others are more hidden from men's eyes, why he is the king of terrors; why he fills the stoutest with alarms; why his very name strikes damp and chill into the merriest assemblies; why almost every one fears to hear the word death, however gently breathed in his ears. Is it not all because there is that after death which terrifies the conscience—the first gnawing of the worm which dieth not, the first flashes of the storm of wrath which will one day break forth, the first sparkles of the fire which burneth to the lowest hell. It is the apprehension of these things which makes men dread death. Indeed, hard must be that conscience, stony that heart which does not fear it. A man whose sins are not washed away in atoning blood—who has no manifest interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, must fear death, unless he be armed with the very armour of leviathan, unless his "heart be as firm as a stone, yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone."

Now Jesus came "to destroy him who had the power of death." The word "destroy" here does not mean to annihilate, to cause Satan to cease to be. Satan, so to speak, cannot be annihilated. Devils can no more perish from annihilation than human beings, for angelic nature, like the soul of man, is immortal—in the elect angels, immortal in bliss, in the fallen angels, immortal in woe. Satan, therefore, according to the sure word of prophecy, is to be "tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20:10.) Jesus then came not to destroy Satan himself, but to destroy his power. The word in the original literally means "render ineffective." Thus it is elsewhere rendered, "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God *without effect*?" (Rom. 3:3), and again, "Do we then *make void* the law through

faith?" (Rom. 3:31), and so again, "The promise *made of none effect.*" (Rom. 4:14; Gal. 3:17.) In all these passages, it is the same word as is translated in our text, "to destroy." It means therefore to break up Satan's dominion, to render it ineffective, to cast him out of his usurped power, to expel him from the human heart of which he had gained possession, and to destroy his kingdom. We therefore read, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8.) "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out" (John 12:31); and again, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18.) Thus he came to destroy the kingdom and rule of Satan, and to bring the children from out of his usurped authority.

iii. But let us now see how he destroyed him that had the power of death. It was "*through death.*" O, what a mystery! that the eternal Son of God must die; that the prince of life must suffer death; that the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, should sink so low as to die upon a cross, that his body and soul should for a time be separated, and that his pallid form should be stretched in the cold sepulchre, though so soon to be raised in power and glory. The word "death" comprehends all that the Redeemer endured that led to death. He came down into this world for the express purpose to die, and therefore took a nature which could die. No man took it from him. Christ did not die upon the cross by the act of man; though he allowed man to nail him there. It was not the nails driven through his hands and feet; it was not the crown of thorns placed upon his brow; it was not the stripes which mangled his back; it was not the languor and faintness under which he suffered, that caused the Lord to die. No man could take his life from him. He himself said, as I have before quoted, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." And as a

proof of this power, just before dying, he "cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost," to show that he was not spent, that he could have lived had he so wished, but that he laid his life down as "an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. 5:2.) Those who were crucified usually lingered long, some even two or three days, and died more of exhaustion than of violence. That there might be a standing testimony that the blessed Lord did not die of exhaustion, but voluntarily yielded up his life upon the altar of his Deity, he died in the full and open exercise of all his mental and bodily powers. I lay great stress upon this point, for it was this voluntary offering of his life which made it acceptable to God as a sacrifice—a doing of his will from the heart. What made it meritorious, what gave it infinite value, was indeed his Godhead; for though God as God cannot suffer, bleed, or die, yet as the Son of God took a nature that could suffer, bleed, and die, the dignity and value of Godhead was stamped upon all the acts and sufferings of the manhood. Merit was therefore in every sigh, in every groan, in every tear, in every drop of blood—a merit of infinite value, because the merit of God. The whole life therefore of Jesus was a meritorious life, his death a meritorious death, his sacrifice a meritorious sacrifice, and thus effectual for redemption, for the pardon of sin, to satisfy justice, fulfil the law, and tender a complete satisfaction to God's injured attributes. As therefore his Deity made his death meritorious, so his voluntary submission to it made it acceptable. This was the mind which was in him—obedience unto death, as the completion of the work. (Phil. 2:5-8.) Thus through death he destroyed him that had the power of death. I mentioned four things whereby Satan has the power of death. 1. Through him it *entered*; 2, by it he *rules*; 3, with it he *terrifies*; 4, of it he is the final *executioner*. Now if Jesus destroyed this power, he must meet it in these four particulars. And so he gloriously did. 1. As Satan brought in

sin, and with sin death, so Jesus brought in righteousness by his obedience unto death, and thus brought life and immortality to light. By dying for sin he put away sin, and death the penalty of sin. 2. By destroying the guilt and power of sin, he overthrew the dominion of Satan, who reigns by sin, and set up his own kingdom of grace and peace, into which he translates his redeemed people. 3. By the blood of the cross he speaks peace to the conscience, and thus delivers it from the fears of death by which Satan terrifies the soul. And 4. He has wrested from Satan the keys of death and hell, and delivered the children from the second death of which Satan is the executioner. You need not then dread Satan, you that fear God: he is a conquered foe. He may harass, distress, and try to alarm you; he may sometimes accuse and sometimes fawn, may sometimes seduce and sometimes embarrass, but he cannot destroy you; for Jesus has destroyed him, broken up his power, taken away his armour wherein he trusted, and divided the spoils.

iv. But the Holy Ghost has given us another reason, and a blessed reason too, why Jesus took part of the flesh and blood of the children: "That he might deliver them who through *fear of death* were all their lifetime *subject to bondage*."

Many, perhaps, most of the dear saints of God, have fears of death; and they must have these fears except so far as a sweet sense of pardoning love is fresh upon their spirit to remove them. The saint of God knows what a holy God he has to deal with; he knows by personal and painful experience the guilt and burden of sin, as often pressing hard and heavy upon his conscience; and he is thoroughly convinced he can do nothing to put away his sins and reconcile his soul unto God. He is deeply conscious also of

the unbelief and thorough helplessness of the creature to procure for him a felt deliverance from his doubts and fears; for he is well satisfied that unless the Lord is pleased to manifest himself to his soul, to speak a pardoning word to his heart, to shed abroad his love, to bring near his righteousness, to apply his precious blood, and to sprinkle it with healing, cleansing power upon his conscience, he cannot enjoy present peace, or look death calmly in the face. Many therefore of the dear saints of God for want of these clear manifestations of pardoning love, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. They cannot feel a sweet liberty in the presence of death, or even think of it without apprehension. And even those who are in some measure delivered from the fear of death are not always delivered from the fear of dying; for there is in our very nature a shrinking from death as a dissolution of our present being. He is the last enemy that is to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26), and he is often not destroyed before he makes his last appearance. Thus, even those are subject to bondage from fear of dying, who are not in bondage from fear of death. Besides which, even after they have been favoured and blessed in their souls, grievous backslidings of heart, if not in life, painful slips and falls known only to themselves, temptations of Satan, fears of deception, suspicions of hypocrisy, gloomy sensations arising from dejected spirits or a nervous frame, hold many down in darkness and imprisonment, nor can they rise up into that sweet and happy liberty which they long to enjoy. What they pant after is the sealing witness of the Spirit, the blessed voice of pardoning mercy, and the immediate breaking in of the love of God, to swallow up all their doubts and fears in a full tide of superabounding grace. Whilst this is withheld, or not enjoyed, they are subject to bondage—many all their lifetime. They have very often expectations of a coming deliverance, and sometimes these rise very high. They

cannot wholly deny that the Lord has had something to do with their hearts; nor can they put aside the tokens, evidences, and marks for good which they have experienced. Talk with them, and you will find they can bring forward blessed evidences of the life of God being in their breast. Many a sip and taste have they had of the goodness and mercy of God; many a sweet though passing visit of the presence of Jesus. Many a precious promise, or encouraging word has been dropped into their heart; so that at times, their faith has been strong, their hope bright, their evidences clear. But after this their bright sky has been clouded again by darkness of mind, guilt of conscience, and temptations of Satan. And yet their life and conversation clearly manifest that the fear of God is in their heart. They evidently show a tender conscience, a humble mind, a meek and quiet spirit, a broken heart, and much fear of saying or doing anything which is wrong. They have come out of the world; they love the saints of God; they know the truth and highly prize it; and they are calling often night and day upon the name of the Lord, pleading his promises, and begging for a word from his gracious lips. All these marks and evidences are evident in them. And yet for want of clear manifestations and blessed discoveries of Christ to their soul, and a sense of pardoned sin in their hearts, many of the dear saints of God, all their lifetime, through fear of death are subject to bondage.

But what does "bondage" imply? Its meaning is best known by those who feel it most. But by "bondage" we may understand chiefly four things. 1. First, a state in which a man is *against his will*. A willing servant is not in bondage to his master; it is the free man made a slave who feels the yoke of bondage. 2. But secondly, bondage implies strong *desires after liberty*, and earnest attempts to attain it. A slave, satisfied with his slavery, can hardly be said to be in bondage. 3. Bondage again is a thing which *perplexes* the

mind. It springs chiefly from guilt; it therefore shuts up the heart, and presses the soul down as into a deep dungeon. This made David cry, "Bring my soul out of prison," and stirred up Jeremiah's cry, "I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon." (Lam. 3:55.) 4. Its last feature is the worst, that it is ever *looking forward*, ever *dreading future and worse ills*, and lest its present prison be but a foretaste of, and an entrance into the gloomy prison of hell.

Now the blessed Jesus took the flesh and blood of the children to deliver and bring them out of this bondage condition. He died, that by destroying through death him who had the power of death, he might deliver them from this gloomy cell. He came not only to put away their sins, but as having put them away to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. (Isa. 61:1.) But now see how this "opening of the prison to them that are bound" meets and overcomes the bondage of which I have been speaking in each of the four points of its severe pressure. 1. Is the captive an *involuntary* bondsman? Is it a part of his misery that he who has the power of death holds him *unwillingly* fast? When Jesus comes with liberty in his heart and hands, he not only delivers the groaning captive, but makes him his own *willing free man*. 2. Again, does the captive exile *long after liberty* and make every attempt to obtain it? When Jesus opens the prison doors he gives him the liberty for which he cries, turning his sighs into songs and his groans into notes of praise. 3. Is the poor captive *perplexed* and troubled with his bondage? When the great deliverer comes, he relieves all his perplexities by dispelling all his doubts and fears. 4. And lastly, Was the sorest point of the heavy bondage the dismal *apprehension* of *worse ills* to come? When the prison doors are opened, there is opened with them a blessed assurance of eternal joys. Thus at every point of bondage the great Deliverer meets and overcomes

the ills which bondage brings, the foes which bondage pictures, and the fears which bondage creates. Here our faith often fails. We do not see that sin *is* put away; that "we have," *already* have, *now* have, "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7.) We do not see, or at least do not believe, that we have a merciful and faithful high priest, who "having himself suffered being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:17, 18.) He can therefore sympathise with his tempted, afflicted people; for he himself has passed through death, and personally and experimentally known the pangs of it. Nay, when his Father hid his face from him, he knew the power of death and the bondage which the fear of death brings; for the dark cloud which passed over earth was but a figure of the darker cloud of the wrath of God which passed over his holy soul. But he passed through it triumphantly, was delivered out of it, and is now risen to the right hand of the Father, where he lives and reigns in glory unspeakable; and, living and reigning there, he lives to deliver his people from the fear of death to which they are in bondage. As he said, "Because I live ye shall live also." (John 14:19.) "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2, 3.) As a proof and evidence of this life at God's right hand, he sends down from on high to his dear family many a message of mercy, many a sweet promise, many a blessed testimony, to assure them that all is well with their souls, that sin shall not prove their ruin, that death shall not consign them to endless misery; but that they are safe in the hollow of his hand, and being interested in his dying love, shall rise to be with him in one unclouded day.

But you may ask, perhaps, if this be so, why does he suffer so many of his dear children to be all their lifetime, through fear of death, subject to bondage? To this I answer, there is

a needs-be for these painful exercises; that we may have our own strength and confidence pulled to pieces, that we may learn the necessity of those manifestations of Christ's love, which alone can put to flight these chilling doubts and fears. If the Lord's people could at will remove them; if they could demand a deliverance from the bondage that the fear of death casts them into, they would want no visitations of the love of Christ, no application of his atoning blood to their conscience, nor the work and witness of his Spirit in their heart. They could claim of their own free will the privilege of overcoming death, take the promises out of God's word as they stand in the bare letter, and with them fight their enemy face to face, making him as dust to their sword and as driven stubble to their bow. But being held down in doubt and fear, death waving his dark banner over their heads, and all hope and help in self being taken away, they are made to sigh and cry mightily to the Lord for a liberating word, for a manifestation of his blood and love. Thus their fears, doubts, and exercises, the hard and heavy bondage under which they labour, fully convince them that nothing but the Lord's own voice can speak peace to their hearts, nothing but his blood purge their conscience, nothing but his love satisfy their souls.

It is then no evidence against you if you are subject to bondage; it is no mark against you if you cannot look death in the face without doubt or fear. Is it not "the children" who feel the bondage? And did not the Lord come to deliver them from it? Are you then not a child because you fear death? If you had no sense of sin, no tenderness of conscience, you would be as careless about death as most others are. Thus your very bondage, your very fears, if they make you sigh and cry for deliverance, are marks of life. And the day will surely come when the Lord will remove these chilling fears and put an end to these killing doubts. As you draw near to

the brink of Jordan, the Lord will be with you to deliver you, who through fear of death, are now subject to bondage; he will extract its sting and rob the grave of its victory, enabling you to shout "Salvation!" through his blood, even at the moment when nature sinks lowest and the last enemy appears nearest in view. O what a blessed Jesus we have; what a heavenly Friend; what a divine Mediator between a holy God and our guilty souls! What love he displayed in taking our flesh and blood; what kind condescension, what wondrous depths of unspeakable grace! He loved us sufficiently to lay down his life for us. Did he not for our sakes endure the agony of the cross, the hidings of God's face, the burden of sin, the pangs of hell? And if he has done all this for us on earth, will he leave his work undone in heaven? Has he quickened you into life, made you feel your sin, taught you to seek for mercy, raised up a good hope in your heart, applied a promise to your soul, given you a testimony? He may have done all this, and yet at times your conscience may be held down in bondage and imprisonment. But it is only to make further way for his grace: to open up more and more of his willingness and ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. It is only to make himself in the end more precious to you: to show you more of his finished work, more of his dying love and atoning blood, and more of what he is able to do in delivering you from all your fears. Thus, as the Adam fall was over-ruled by the wisdom of God to make manifest the riches of his eternal love, mercy, and grace, so your very doubts, fears, and bondage will be blessedly over-ruled to give you further discoveries of Christ, to wean you more from an arm of flesh, and to make you know more experimentally what the Lord Jesus Christ is to those who seek his face and hang upon and trust him and him alone.

A man who believes that he may live and die, and that safely

without an experimental knowledge of Christ, will never seek his face, never call upon his name, never long for the manifestations of his love. But he who feels that he can neither live nor die without him, who knows that he has a soul that only Christ can save, who has sins which only Christ's blood can pardon, iniquities that only Christ's righteousness can cover, will be often crying to the Lord to visit his soul with his salvation, and will find no rest till Christ appears; but when Christ appears to the joy of his soul, will bless and praise him with joyful lips. And O what a glorious trophy will that man be of Christ's eternal victory over sin and Satan, when he will reign with him and with his assembled saints in one immortal day!