

THE LIVING STONE, DISALLOWED OF MEN, BUT CHOSEN OF GOD AND PRECIOUS

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, August 14th, 1853, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:4, 5

He that will build a house must build it upon a rock. This is the Lord's own figure and the Lord's own declaration: "Every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock." We are all immortal beings. When born, we are born for eternity; for we carry in this frail tabernacle an undying soul, capable of enjoying unspeakable bliss, and capable of enduring unspeakable woe. These weighty considerations may well make us pause and ask ourselves, What is the foundation of our hope? As regards our prospects for eternity, they all hinge on this point—whether we are building upon the sand, or whether we are building on the rock. If we are building upon the rock, we shall live for ever; but if we are building on the sand, we shall fall, and great will that fall be, for it will be for ever and ever.

You will observe how these thoughts are connected with the text, in which we read of Christ as the living stone, and of believers as lively stones that are built upon Him.

In preaching the Word of God I aim mainly at two points. 1. To make my statements as clear as possible; and, 2. To speak to the heart as directly and forcibly as I am able. By

the first I address myself to the understanding; by the second I appeal to the conscience. The application of the word to the heart by the Holy Spirit, I well know, can alone make the word effectual; but as far as man is concerned as an instrument, unless he speak clearly, who can understand? and unless he appeal to the conscience, who can feel? I shall, therefore, for the sake of clearness of statement and force of application, divide my subject into four leading branches.

I. Christ, the living stone disallowed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

II. Believers as lively stones coming unto this living stone.

III. How they are built up upon the Lord Jesus Christ as a spiritual house.

IV. How as a holy priesthood they offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I. The whole strength and permanence of a building depend upon the foundation. If the foundation be right, the building upon that foundation is right; if the foundation be wrong, the building, however ornamental to the eye, however beautiful in situation or decorated in architecture, is radically wrong; and all its architectural ornament, by its additional weight, only tends to hasten its downfall.

Christ is here spoken of by the unerring Spirit as a "stone;" in other words, a rock, the foundation on which the Church of God is built; and He is called "a *living* stone," as opposed to a dead foundation. Now, in what marked characteristics is He a living stone?

In viewing the Lord Jesus as a living Mediator at the right

hand of the Father, we must make a distinction between Him as God, and as Man, and as God-Man. Thus viewed we shall see there are, so to speak, three different lives in the glorious Redeemer.

1. As God, He has a *self-existent* life; for He is a Person of the glorious Jehovah, the Son of the Father in truth and love. His own words were: "If ye believe not that I am"—that is, the great and glorious I AM THAT I AM—"ye shall die in your sins." This life is eternal, unoriginated, self-existent.

2. But there is His life as Man, the life which He lived when He was upon earth; this is a *created* life, for it was created when the Son of God took body and soul at the same instant of time in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing operations of the Holy Ghost. Of this life He speaks, John 10:17, 18: "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." This is the life He took; it therefore had a beginning; and this life He laid down; it therefore had a temporary end. But His life as God was neither taken nor laid down; it had no beginning, and can have no cessation.

3. There is, thirdly, the life which He now lives at God's right hand. This is a *given* life, according to these words—"As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given the Son to have life in Himself." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "Because I live ye shall live also." This is His mediatorial life, His risen life, His present life, as the Head of influence to His Church and people. Let me make these points a little clearer and plainer to your mind. Look up and see Jesus at God's right hand. Is He not there as God?

Cannot you see in Him, as God, a divine, self-existent life? "Yes," you answer. Look again. Can you not see Him wearing our nature, having a human body and a human soul? Is that—I speak with all reverence—a dead body or a living body? You say, "Living, certainly." And if living, is it not a human life, animating human members? Here is His assumed, created life. Now look again. Has He not life to impart to His members below? This is not His divine life, for that He cannot give; nor is it His human life, for that is limited to His own human nature; but it is a mediatorial life, whereby as the second Adam He became a quickening Spirit.

Now the text, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ as "a living stone," sets Him forth as the Mediator, Immanuel, God with us; and therefore the life here spoken of, as belonging to and dwelling in Him as "a living stone," is His *given* life—His risen, His mediatorial life in which He lives at God's right hand as the covenant Head of all divine influence, as the Source of all grace, as the Author of all spiritual life, as the Resurrection and the Life, which He declared He was to Martha. "Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25, 26).

But though I have shown that these three lives are distinct, yet let no one think they are disunited. As in the blessed Trinity there are three Persons and yet but one God, and as the human and divine nature of the Lord Jesus are distinct and yet united in one glorious Person, so it is with the lives of which I have been speaking. They are distinct and yet united; all needful and all blessed, and all centering in Immanuel, God with us.

Now, it is necessary that the foundation on which the Church

of Christ is to stand should be a living foundation. A dead foundation suits dead sinners. Dead works and dead professors go well together; but a living Head requires living members, and living members require a living Head; life in the stem, life in the branches; life in the husband, life in the bride; a living Jesus for a living people. Thus He is "a living stone" at God's right hand, as the apostle speaks—"But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing *He ever liveth* to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:24, 25). Thus is He the Rock of Ages, the living foundation which God the Father has laid in Zion, as the prophet speaks—"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28:16). Now this is the only foundation on which the sinner can build. There is, there can be no other; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

i. But this living stone is "disallowed of men." They will have nothing to do with it; and that for various reasons. 1. In some, the world shuts out all room for Christ. There is not so much as a crevice or a corner for Him or His truth. The love of the world bars out the love and service of God. Jesus Himself declares—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If the world has firm possession of a man's heart, there is no place for the Lord Jesus Christ. If his heart is going out after covetousness, and if he is swallowed up in the cares and anxieties of this life, what desire can there be in his soul toward a bleeding, suffering Immanuel? What earnest breathings or longings that He would fill his soul with mercy and love, would bedew him with His favour, come into his heart, and sit on the throne of his affections? "My word hath no place in you," said the Lord to the Jews of old. And why?

Because their hearts were filled with worldly self.

2. Sin indulged and delighted in is another cause why men "disallow this living stone:" they love sin too madly to part with it; and therefore they reject this living stone which God has chosen to be the rock on which to build His Church, because they cannot have Christ and sin together.

3. In others, pride and self-righteousness are causes why they reject the Lord Jesus, and why He becomes disallowed in their hearts. They are like a builder (if one of such consummate folly could be found, but we may assume it for the sake of the illustration), who in laying a foundation should place it partly on the rock and partly on the sand, reasoning thus with himself—"If the sand should give way, there will be the rock; and if the rock should give way, there will be the sand; and thus between the rock and the sand surely my building will stand." This would be a work of consummate folly, were it a bridge, a palace, or a cathedral; but there is a great deal of religious architecture in which this folly is daily practised. Christ the rock, self the sand; the gospel to support one part, and the law to sustain the other; where Christ fails, let self come in, and where self fails, let Christ come in. How many who think themselves master builders are guilty of this folly! But this half and half work, this partly Christ and partly self, partly gospel and partly law, partly promise and partly precept, what is it but really disallowing the living stone as the foundation which God has laid in Zion? Such a building as this will certainly no more stand in grace than in nature. Yet how many foolish builders there are, who with much labour and pains, spend their lives in erecting a building which in the end will only fall and crush them in its ruins.

4. But though I have mentioned three reasons why this living

stone is disallowed of men, yet the fourth grand reason I have not yet named. The real truth is, that their eyes are not opened by the Spirit to see, nor their consciences wrought upon by the power of God to feel their need of this living stone, and its suitability to build upon for eternity. The veil of unbelief and ignorance is over their heart, so that they neither see their misery nor the way of God's mercy. Not feeling any need of Jesus, they have no sense of His suitability to the wants of a sinner; having no true knowledge of the depth of the fall, they have no looking out for God's superabounding grace; having no sense of the wounds carved by sin, they have no desire for the healing balm; having no acquaintance with miserable self, they have and desire to have no acquaintance with the blessed Jesus. A man's greatest enemy is himself. Self is about the most deceitful fellow that ever existed. He can wear every dress, speak every language, assume every shape; tower like a giant, or sink like a dwarf; fill a palace, or crawl into a hovel; swell out into an Alp, or fall into a molehill; revel in sin, or put on the mask of religion; gamble in a hell [*hall?*] in St. James's, or smoke in a pot-house in St. Giles's. What cannot this monster self do; and what can he not become? But he is never so subtle and deceitful as when he puts on the mask of religion. Self must always be somewhat. It kills him to be nothing. If he cannot reign as king, he frets and pines. But he can no longer sit on the throne, if the Lord Jesus Christ come into the heart. Self therefore will always disallow the Lord Jesus Christ, for to receive Him is to part with all its glory. The first lesson therefore in religion is to deny self. "If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." Till self, then, is denied, there is no heart acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ.

ii. But though "disallowed of men," he is "chosen of God," and God, I speak it with reverence, cannot make an unwise

choice. To think that would be to attribute folly to the Most High. He is "chosen of God," because He alone was fitted for the work. It would have crushed an archangel to bear what Jesus bore. No bright angel, nor glorious seraph, no created being, however exalted, could have borne the load of sin; and therefore none but God's own Son, not by office, but by eternal generation, the Son of the Father in truth and in love, could bear the weight of imputed sin and guilt. As Hart says—

"Such loads of sin were on Him put,
He could but just sustain the load."

But He was "chosen of God" that He might be Zion's Representative, Zion's Sin-bearer, and Zion's glorious Head; that there might be a foundation for the Church to rest upon with all her miseries, all her sins, all her sorrows, all her base backslidings and idolatries, all her weight of woe and depths of guilt. It need be a strong foundation to bear this Church, so loaded with degradation, ignominy, and shame! God's own Son, and none else in heaven or in earth, could bear all this. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else."

He was "chosen of God" in eternity, in the divine councils, that He might be a Mediator. He was "chosen" to become man; chosen to become the Rock of Ages, Zion's resting place, harbour, anchorage, and home. Jesus was ever therefore, and ever will be unspeakably "precious" to the Father's heart. Man despises Him, but God honours Him; man disallows Him, but God values Him as His co-equal Son.

iii. God, therefore, not only values Him as His "fellow," and has chosen Him to be the Mediator, but He is in His eyes unspeakably "precious;" precious in His Deity; precious in His

humanity; precious in His blood, precious in His obedience, precious in His sufferings, precious in His death, precious in His resurrection, precious in His ascension to God's right hand, precious in the eyes of God as the Great High Priest over the house of God, and the only Mediator between God and man. Is He not worthy of all your trust, all your confidence, all your hope, and all your acceptance? Look where we will, He is our only hope. Look at the world; what can you reap from that but a harvest of sorrow? Look at money; it makes itself wings and flies away. Perhaps the rich are the most miserable people in the world; they have so many cares which money cannot alleviate, and so many wants which money cannot buy. And look at everything men call good and great; all that man highly values, good perhaps for time, but valueless for eternity. Perhaps no man could put a higher value than I upon what man naturally regards as good and great, especially upon human learning, and attainments in knowledge and science. But, I have seen them as compared with eternity, to be but breath and smoke, a vapour that passeth away and is no more seen. But the things of eternity, the peace of God in the heart, the work of the Spirit upon the soul, with all the blessed realities of salvation—these are not like the airy mists of time, the vapours that spring out of the earth and return to earth again, but are enduring and eternal, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

II. But we pass on to show how believers *come to this living stone*—"To whom *coming* as unto a living stone." How else but by coming to Him can I get into union and communion with Him? Look at the thing naturally. Figures in nature sometimes help us to right conceptions in grace. Here is a builder laying a foundation. That implies that there is a superstructure to be raised upon it, stone after stone to be brought and laid upon that foundation, until the whole

building is completed. Now, in this case, does not every stone *come* to the foundation? The foundation does not go to the stone, but the stone to the foundation. This is common sense. I need not insult your understanding by enlarging further on this point. But take the thing in grace. Here am I standing before God as a sinner by nature and practice. How is my soul to be saved? How am I to escape unutterable woe, the lake of unquenchable fire? I must have an interest in Christ. I must have a living union with the Lord Jesus; I must have a spiritual knowledge of Him, a vital faith in His person, blood, and righteousness. But this I cannot have apart from spiritual union with the Lord Jesus, standing an isolated wretch in myself. I must therefore be transplanted from nature's wild and barren soil, and put into the garden of the Lord; I must be taken out of the quarry of nature and be made a living stone, and then put by God Himself on the living stone which He hath laid in Zion. This in scripture is compared to the operation of grafting, which you have all heard of, if not seen. In grafting, the gardener takes a living scion and grafts it into a living stock. He does not take a dead stick out of the hedge and graft it into the living stock, nor does he take a dead stock and graft upon it a living scion. But he grafts a living scion into a living stock; and then they unite, grow together, and produce goodly fruit. So in grace. If I have a union with Christ the living stone, I must be myself a living stone. It is a pity our translators did not preserve the same word here; it is so in the original, which literally reads thus—"To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as living stones." Had they done so, it would have thrown a clearer light upon the identity of Christ and His members. Introducing the word "lively," instead of "living," seems to mar the beauty and harmony of the truth here.

But what is the evidence of their possessing life? It is their *coming* to Jesus. This is God's own testimony that they are

living stones, for can a *dead* stone come? But *how* do they come? We cannot here lay down one positive, precise line, for God like a wise schoolmaster, adapts His lessons to the ages and capacities of His pupils. He does not give the same precise lesson to every pupil, but carefully adapts His teaching to their varied wants. Yet, however diversified, all His teachings tend to the same point—to bring out of self, to cut down all legal, self-righteous hopes, and to lead the soul to feel its need of the Lord Jesus. But this often requires deep and cutting work. Self has taken so deep a root in the ground by nature, that the knife is required to be applied very low down to cut asunder the tap root.

But to recur to our question. *How* do they come? With weeping and supplications, with piercing convictions of sin, with the renunciation of all their own righteousness, with deep self-abasement, self-condemned, and self-abhorred, seeing and feeling nothing in themselves but wretchedness and misery. If they do not feel *this*, they never will come off the sandy foundation on which they are resting, and be brought to stand upon the Rock of Ages.

But this is not sufficient; something more than this is needed. They must be lifted up and out of self by the Almighty hand of God, and set down by His power upon the living stone. There is often a great mistake made here. Many content themselves with merely seeing the suitability of the Lord Jesus, and having desires after Him; but there is something more wanted than this. There must be a taking up of the soul by the hands of God, and a putting of it on Christ the living Rock. Let me dwell a little longer on this point; and to help my meaning, I will revert to my figure. Here is a foundation laid by a builder, and here is a stone ready to be put on it, squared and fashioned, and fitted for the place it is intended to occupy. It is suitable for the foundation, and the

foundation is suitable for it. If the stone could speak, it would say, "How suitable that foundation is to me; I want to be put on it; it suits me and I suit it." Now, the suitability is not enough to bring the two together; a hand is wanted which the stone does not possess. What is that in grace? the operation of the Spirit upon the heart, drawing the soul to the Mediator, and setting it down into Him and upon Him. Then, this "living stone," not only comes to the Lord Jesus, but is built upon Him and into Him, being cemented by the unction of the Holy Spirit. This creates a union between the living stone and the living Foundation; the two then coalesce; there is a mutual union between them: and out of this mutual union flows mutual communion. These are points of vital godliness, much overlooked in our day, but matters of deep importance.

III. But as they are brought to, and built upon Christ as living stones, they are "*built up a spiritual house.*"

The "spiritual house" here, may admit of three significations.

1. It may signify, *first*, and primarily, the whole Church of the Firstborn whose names are written in heaven—the elect of God, and especially the whole building, when it will be brought together in all its parts, and the top stone be put on with shoutings of grace unto it. This is the spiritual house in all its completeness and beauty as it will shine forth throughout eternity.

2. But, *secondly*, the words "spiritual house," may apply to individual churches. A gospel church is an ordinance of God; and where individual churches are gathered together in the name of God, and consist of living members of Christ's body, being thus built as living stones on Christ the living stone, they become each "a spiritual house." The members of a

gospel church form the varied apartments of the spiritual house; and though some may be the garret and others the cellar, some the parlour and others the drawing-room, yet collectively they form the spiritual house.

3. But *thirdly*, and this point I shall chiefly aim at in my subsequent remarks, the word may be taken to signify an individual believer; for each believer is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and by His personal indwelling becomes a spiritual house, a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Now, viewing the individual believer as "a spiritual house," we may speak of him as possessing three distinct—what shall I call them?—faculties. We are sometimes at a loss to express spiritual things in words. I will, therefore, call them faculties, for want of a more significant and expressive term. He has an *understanding*, a *conscience*, and *affections*; and this understanding is a spiritual understanding, this conscience is a tender conscience, and these affections are living affections. Now, as he becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost, it is in these three apartments that the blessed Spirit dwells. First, He enlightens the *understanding*, as the apostle speaks—"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." As the temple of old had a golden candlestick, or as the word more properly signifies, lamp, which lighted the holy place, which without it would have been in utter darkness, so the light of the Holy Spirit illuminates the spiritual understanding of every child of God. This is "the unction from the Holy One," whereby he understands the things of God, and has a clear apprehension of "the truth as it is in Jesus." He thus becomes "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." This is seeing light in God's light. As the blessed Lord opened the understanding of the disciples that they might understand the Scriptures, so this light of the Spirit opens the spiritual understanding. This apartment may

be called the vestibule or central hall of the soul, from which the light streams into every other chamber.

2. But there is beyond this, an inner apartment, the very seat of the King Himself, in which He spiritually dwells, and that is *the conscience* made tender in the fear of the Lord. This may be called the King's living room, where He daily and hourly transacts business; where He judges and decides matters brought before Him, and pronounces them good or evil.

3. Then there is the innermost room of all, the bridal chamber of the Lamb and His wife. This is the warm and tender affection of a believing, loving heart. It is in this bridal chamber that the Lord specially manifests His love to His spouse and bride, and draws forth every *affection* of her heart to Himself. Light in the understanding, life in the conscience, love in the heart; what more can we want? How distant at times these things seem from us! Yet they are realities, the sum and substance of genuine godliness. If I have no light in my understanding, no life in my conscience, no love in my heart, what proof have I of being "a living stone?" How can that be "a spiritual house" in which there is nothing spiritual?

But the same work of the Spirit which makes the spiritual house makes the Church of God also holy. The living stones are therefore called in the text "a holy priesthood." That all God's saints are priests is one of the grand distinguishing doctrines of Scripture. This is God's own testimony; for the song of the redeemed is, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests." Bear these two things in mind, that every believer is a priest unto God, and that there are no priests but believers. If there is one thing to me more hateful than another, it is priestcraft. I am no priest. When I renounced

my Church of England priesthood, I renounced priestcraft altogether. I am a minister, I hope, of the Spirit, but I am no priest in the ordinary sense of the word, that is, in the acceptation of popery and Puseyism. For a priest implies a sacrifice and an altar; and sacrifice and altar we have none but the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and the altar of His human nature on which that sacrifice lay. Were this truth firmly impressed on the mind of the English nation, that under this dispensation there are no priests except believers; we need no more fear popery coming in again than we need fear a French invasion. It is the belief that ministers are priests which mainly keeps up popery. Take away, then, priesthood out of the professing church, and you cut the very sinews of popery and Puseyism.

But God's people are "a holy priesthood," not in the sense in which Aaron was a priest, nor in the sense in which men call themselves priests at Rome and Oxford; but in a spiritual sense, as offering up "spiritual sacrifices." They, too, are holy, not in the flesh, nor by any transmission of creature sanctity, but holy in the holiness of Christ, "who of God is made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." As united to Him, His holiness is theirs; and as supplied out of His fulness, they are made partakers of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

IV. But I pass on to our fourth and last point—the offering of spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The main office of the priest was to offer sacrifices; and the Romish church calls its ministers priests, as believing they offer a real sacrifice in the mass. But they are carnal priests, offering a carnal sacrifice which God abhors. But God's priests, believers in the Lord Jesus, as a holy priesthood, taught and sanctified by God, offer up spiritual sacrifices.

1. What are these spiritual sacrifices which they offer up and are acceptable to God? The main sacrifice is that broken heart and contrite spirit of which David speaks—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17). When they come before God, pressed down with a deep sense of their vileness and worthlessness, humbled into the dust, this is "a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God." He looks with complacency upon the man "who is of a humble and contrite spirit, and that trembles at His word." Now if you have felt sorrow, humiliation, and contrition for the sin in any degree, fear not, for you are a priest unto God; aye a far better priest than Cardinal Wiseman, with all his train; for you offer up spiritual sacrifices, and he can only offer up a carnal one.

2. Another "sacrifice" is prayer and supplication coming forth out of a burdened heart and a troubled soul. Have you never offered up this spiritual sacrifice? But say you, "my prayers are so weak and wandering, so stammering and unconnected." Well, what was an acceptable sacrifice under the law? Was it always a whole burnt-offering? It was so sometimes; but the victim was for the most part cut up, and only certain joints laid upon the altar. So it is with many sincere prayers. If there is not the whole burnt-offering complete, there are the parts of the sacrifice laid upon the altar. However broken and inarticulate your prayers may seem to be, yet if it be true prayer, it is acceptable to God as a spiritual sacrifice. Look at this as seen in the light of the ceremonial law. It mattered not whether the bullock, lamb, or pigeon were great or small, so long as it was a clean beast or bird; if it belonged to the order of sacrifices which God had appointed, it was acceptable to Him. Carry this into the things of God. Our prayers and petitions are often poor, weak, stammering things, but are they offered unto God from the heart under inspirations of His Spirit? Are they what

He Himself has wrought in your soul? Is it spiritual breathing? Does it flow from Divine teaching? Is it of God, is it from heaven? Then, if it be, it is an acceptable sacrifice. I like broken prayers. They are usually the best prayers which we offer up. But you say, "when we hear ministers pray, they do not offer broken prayers." No; they do not. There is the gift as well as the grace of prayer. It would not do for ministers in public to pray with stammering lips; but could you accompany home that minister whom you have been hearing pray in public, you would hear him sighing, groaning, and stammering in a very different way from what he did when called upon to engage in public worship.

3. Praise and thanksgiving are also spiritual sacrifices. Sometimes when the soul is lifted up with joy on account of the presence of the Lord, it can burst forth into thankfulness and praise. This is a sacrifice well pleasing to God as He Himself declares, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." The apostle therefore says, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." To bless God for His mercy is "to offer the calves of our lips;" and this is the least we can do in return for His goodness, as David speaks, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord."

4. Devotedness to God's service, what we may term, self-sacrifice, implying the renunciation of our will and way, profit and pleasure, with the crucifixion of self and sin, the old man and the world, is another spiritual sacrifice. To lay down at the foot of the cross worldly pride and religious self-righteousness, schemes of aspiring ambition and projects of pecuniary profit, to be willing to be nothing and have nothing contrary to the mind of Christ and the will and word of the Most High—what a rare grace is this, and yet what a spiritual

sacrifice acceptable to God.

5. Kindness and liberality to the Lord's poor and needy people, an open heart and an open hand, a free ungrudging spirit ever flowing forth in words of kindness and actions of generosity to the humble in rank and destitute in circumstances—this free, liberal, bountiful spirit is another spiritual sacrifice. This is God's own testimony concerning it; "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." And should we not be willing to offer to the Lord our best of everything—our time, our health, our strength, our talent, our property, the faculties of our mind, and the members of our body—are not all His by right of gift and of redemption? "Ye are not your own," says the apostle. Why? "for ye are bought with a price. Therefore," he adds, "glorify God in your body and spirit which are God's." Now, when all these things are done from spiritual motives and to spiritual ends, under the teaching and operations of the blessed Spirit, then they become "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God," a pleasing offering to the Majesty on high.

But they are only acceptable "through Christ Jesus." His blood must wash them from all their defilements of sin and self, His righteousness cover them, and the merits of His death and intercession perfume them as they enter the courts of heaven. They are not acceptable in themselves. As the persons of the believers are only accepted in the Beloved, so their prayers and praises, words and works, are only acceptable through Him.

What a mercy to belong to this "holy priesthood," and to have any testimony that Christ has presented our persons, and is presenting our sacrifices so as to make them acceptable to God. Had we but ourselves and our own defiled

words and works to look to and rest upon, we might well despair of acceptance or salvation; but having so great a High Priest to present us before the throne of God, we have every encouragement for faith, every ground for hope, and every motive for love.