

The New Covenant and the Blood of Sprinkling

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"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Hebrews 12:24

In the two verses immediately preceding our text, the apostle holds up to our view a rich cluster of gospel blessings as the happy and enduring portion of the redeemed and regenerated family of God. But in order to bring them more vividly and impressively before our eyes, he draws a contrast between the two dispensations—that of the law and that of the gospel; his intention being thereby to show more clearly and effectually that the believer in Christ is delivered from the curse and condemnation of the former, that he may enjoy all the blessings and mercies of the latter.

I. I shall, therefore, by way of introduction, briefly touch upon what he has here said upon these two dispensations, that we may, with God's help and blessing, see more clearly the meaning and force of the words of our text. In order, then, to make the contrast between the two dispensations plainer and stronger, he tells us *first* what we are *not* come unto: "For ye are not come unto *the mount that might be touched.*" This "mount that might be touched" was mount Sinai, from which the law was given by Moses; and it is called "a mount that might be touched" as being an earthly object, an actual, literal mountain, and as such capable of being seen by the eye, touched by the hand, and trodden by the foot, as by the foot of Moses, or even (though it was against the prohibition) by that of man or beast. This literal, tangible mount well represented the earthly, visible character

of the Law as contrasted with the Gospel, of which the emblem is "mount Sion," not the literal height of Zion, but that heavenly Jerusalem, which is free and the mother of us all, (Gal. 4:26,) and as such is essentially invisible, spiritual, and heavenly, not to be seen by the natural eye, nor trodden by the actual foot. But, in allusion to the accompaniments of the law on that solemn day when God revealed it from mount Sinai, he speaks of the mountain as "*burning with fire.*" God, when he gave the law, came down upon mount Sinai in terrible majesty, that it might ever stand before the church of God as a representation of his holiness, justice, and ever-burning wrath against all transgression and all transgressors. Thus we find it recorded in the book of Exodus, (19:16-18,) "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Thus the law was revealed in flaming fire of a character so awful and of an extent so wide that it seemed as if the whole mount burned with it like a furious volcano, and the smoke of this burning mountain ascended as the smoke of a mighty furnace, to make it manifest far and wide, as it cast its lurid flame over the desert and lighted up the surrounding rocks and peaks, that it was a fiery law; that the God who revealed it was a consuming fire, and as such would burn up the transgressor as the flame rolled down the mountain side into the vale below. It was also surrounded with "*blackness,*" to show that as before a storm the heavens gather blackness, till out of the bosom of the dark cloud issues the forked lightning and bursts the rolling thunder; so

blackness covered the mount, as an intimation that behind that black cloud was hidden the wrath of God which one day would burst forth in thunder and lightning against a guilty world. Besides this blackness there was also "*darkness*," to show the nature of that dispensation—that it was a dark dispensation. There was a veil over the face of Moses, its typical mediator. God did not make himself known therein as the God of all grace. It was not illuminated by any beams of love and mercy, and therefore darkness surrounded the mount as a representation that in that dispensation there shone through it no life-giving rays and beams of his gracious countenance. There was "*tempest*" also, indicative of that coming storm when "God shall come and shall not keep silence; when a fire shall devour before him and it shall be very tempestuous round about him" (Psalm 50:3); when he shall come to judge a guilty world; when all nations shall be assembled before his bar, and his wrath burst forth so that none can quench it against the impenitent and unbelieving.

ii. We need not, however, enter further into these accompaniments of the law given at mount Sinai. It is our mercy that if indeed we believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God we are delivered from standing at the foot of that fiery mount; and that to us the fire and blackness and darkness, the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words, are no longer indications of God's anger against our sins, but, like a departing thunder storm, have rolled away into the far distance, whilst the light of the sun is shining upon our heads. Having then shown what they, as believers in Christ, were delivered from; that they were not come unto that terrible mount Sinai, but were brought by faith in the Lord the Lamb to a better spot and to a happier mount, the apostle goes on to say, "*But ye are come unto mount Sion.*" This, therefore, as connected with our text, will demand a

few moments' consideration.

1. Mount Sinai stands in contrast with "*mount Sion*" as mount Ebal stood in contrast with mount Gerizim (Deut. 27:12, 13): the one the mount of cursing, the other the mount of blessing. Thus as all the wrath of God is on mount Sinai, so all the mercy of God is on mount Sion. And as all the curses of God fell in blackness and darkness, fire and tempest, upon Sinai's burning top; so all the mercy, love, goodness, and grace of God fall upon mount Sion, and surround it as with a heavenly cloud of most glorious and ever enduring lustre. But why should "mount Sion" be thus selected? For this reason: David, after having taken mount Zion from the Jebusites, made it the place of his residence; it thus became "the city of the great king;" there he reigned and ruled; thence he issued his laws; and thence he extended the sway of his peaceful sceptre over the whole of the holy land. From that circumstance mount Sion became the great type and figure of the gospel of Jesus Christ, or rather of that kingdom of God of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the head and sovereign. For as David sitting upon mount Zion, in the palace built there as his royal seat, issued his commands which were obeyed all over the land; so our blessed Jesus has been exalted, according to God's promise, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion;" and thus sitting as King in Zion, issues his mandates and sways his peaceful sceptre over the hearts of his obedient people. It is a common idea that mount Zion is a type of the gospel because the temple was built upon it. That, however, is not true: the temple was not built on mount Zion but upon mount Moriah; but Zion was the site of David's palace, and for that reason became a type of the kingdom of our blessed Lord in grace and glory.

2. But he adds, "*And unto the city of the living God.*" This is the church of Christ, in which the living God has fixed his

abode, according to his own words, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." (2 Cor. 6:16.) But this church of Christ may be viewed under two aspects—its militant and its glorified condition. In each it is the city of the living God; for in its present militant and suffering state, the church may still say, "We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Yes, even in this time state, she may say, "There is a river"—the river of life and love—"the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (Psl. 45:4.) But more especially in its future glorified state will the church of Christ be the "city of God," for as such holy John saw her in vision. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2.) And that this is the apostle's meaning seems evident from the expression, "*the heavenly Jerusalem,*" which immediately follows. This "heavenly Jerusalem," then, is spoken of in contrast with the earthly Jerusalem; for as the earthly Jerusalem was "the city of the great king," so the Church of God, "the heavenly Jerusalem," is the city of our glorious King Jesus. That this heavenly Jerusalem signifies the church of God in both its suffering and glorified state is evident from comparing the words of Paul, where he speaks of "Jerusalem which is above is free and the mother of us all," which she is in our time state, with the words of John which I have just quoted, when he saw the new Jerusalem or the church in glory, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

3. The apostle also speaks of their being come to an "*innumerable company of angels,*" who surround the throne, and who, though not redeemed by the atoning blood of the Lamb, yet are confirmed in their standing by the incarnation of the Son of God; God being pleased to gather up into him as one head elect angels and elect men, that he might be

"the head of all principality and power," and that "at his name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Col. 2:10; Phil. 2:10.)

4. He also speaks of their having come to the "general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven." He looked up, or rather looked round, and saw a vast assembly, a multitude that no man could number, exceeding the stars of the sky and the sands upon the sea shore. This is "the church of the first-born," who were redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb, as the first-born in Egypt were redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb, and whose names are written in heaven, as being inscribed in the Lamb's book of life.

5. He then takes a view of "God *the Judge of all*," the reader of all hearts, the searcher of all reins, who holds the scales of justice with unerring hand, to whom they are come as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

6. He then speaks of their being come also to the "*spirits of just men made perfect*;" the enfranchised souls of those justified men who were delivered from all the sins and infirmities of their mortal body, and who, in the presence of Christ, were waiting in expectation of that glorious day when the Son of God should raise up their sleeping dust that they might be for ever, soul and body, with the Lord.

What glorious objects does he thus set before our eyes, and how he speaks of the saint of God as having come far, far away from the fiery mount where all was blackness and darkness and tempest, and being brought by the Holy Ghost, in the actings of living faith, unto this blessed mount Sion, where he enjoys the blessings of the gospel in the

manifestations of the love and mercy and grace of God!

7. He then adds the words of our text: "*And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*"

In opening up the meaning of these words, we may

I.—*First*, with God's blessing, show what is spiritually and experimentally intended by having "*come unto Jesus.*"

II.—*Secondly*, the character which he bears as being "*the Mediator of the new covenant.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, "*the blood of sprinkling,*" to which the believer is said also to have come.

IV.—And *Fourthly*, the blessing ascribed to this blood of sprinkling, that it "*speaketh better things than that of Abel.*"

I.—Look then first at the *character* of the believer as here drawn by an inspired pen, as here described by an unerring hand. He is said to have "*come,*" implying that there has been a sacred power put forth in his soul whereby he has been brought away from mount Sinai and come unto mount Sion. And not only so, but especially and above all things he is said to have "*come to Jesus;*" for that is the grand, distinguishing mark of a true believer.

I. But let us, with God's help and blessing, look a little more closely at what it is to come to Jesus. The Scripture is full of it. Thus our blessed Lord said in the days of his flesh, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28); and again, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I

will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37); and again, "If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink." (John 7:37.) Peter also describes the experience of a Christian as "a coming unto Jesus as a living stone." (1 Pet. 2:4.) But I need not quote passages so familiar to you; let me rather show you *what* it is to come. And first, what work upon the heart and conscience is necessary before we really do or can come unto Jesus? Before, then, we can come rightly to him we must be taught by the Holy Spirit to feel our need of him. This may seem very simple, and indeed is so in doctrine and theory, but not so in experience, for to come to Jesus is the hardest thing in the world; and no one really comes to him until he has tried every other refuge, every other hope of salvation; until he has been driven out of house and home, made an outcast and ready to perish. Newton justly says,

"Few, if any, come to Jesus
Till reduced to self-despair."

The work of the Holy Spirit, then, in his first divine work upon the soul, in his convincing operations upon the conscience, is chiefly to make us feel our need of Jesus. If he bring us to the law, it is not to rest in it, or to obtain salvation and righteousness by it. If he take us to the fiery mount there to show unto us the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and cause us to hear the voice of words, until, with Moses, we say, "I exceedingly fear and quake," it is not to leave us there under that burning mountain; but it is that he may lead us from mount Sinai to mount Sion; that he may bring us to Jesus. But this can only be by divine teaching and by heavenly drawing. As the Lord himself said, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" and again, "Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:44, 40.) Our convictions, our distressing sensations

of guilt, shame, and sorrow: our doubts and fears, our trials and temptations, our varied afflictions, from whatever source they come or of whatever nature they be, are all so many means in the hand of the Spirit to bring us near unto Jesus; so that if they do not operate in that way or produce that result, they bear no evidence of being of God, or that we have heard and learned of the Father. But many poor souls are a long time before they come to Jesus, at least with any faith in living exercise. This is the case of some from ignorance, their lot being cast in dark places where the gospel is not preached, where Jesus is not held up as the only hope and help, as the only way of salvation from the wrath of God; and others, though they may sit under a clearer sound of truth, yet from unbelief, infidelity, darkness of mind, hardness of heart, pressure of guilt, doubt and fear, and other powerful temptations, though they may feel their deep and daily need of Jesus, yet are kept back by these hindrances from coming to him, so as to receive out of his fulness grace for grace. But the same Holy Spirit who makes us feel our want of Jesus sooner or later discovers him to our soul. The Scripture is full of Jesus: he is the light of the Bible, from the opening page to the closing verse. As God hath set the sun in the firmament of heaven to give light to the earth, so has he set Jesus in the holy word as the Sun of Righteousness to shine through every page. But whilst there is a veil of unbelief over our heart, it is with us as it is in nature when the sun is behind a dark cloud; though he is there, yet we see him not. The promise, however, given to Israel is, that "when it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away." (2 Cor. 3:16.) Thus when the soul is enabled to turn to the Lord with weeping and supplication, in the fulfilment of that promise he becomes in more or less measure discovered to the eye of faith as a suitable Saviour; a divine light is cast upon the understanding, or some ray or beam of his unspeakable mercy and grace shine athwart the

dark cloud into the believer's mind, and by this guiding ray he is led unto Jesus. And thus he is drawn to Jesus by a divine power, according to those words, "None can come to me except my Father that hath sent me draw him." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) None can really come to Jesus by faith except this drawing power is put forth, and this our blessed Lord himself assures us comes directly from the Father. He, indeed, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, works by the Holy Spirit; for that gracious and blessed Teacher acts upon the soul by his secret power and influence, puts cords of love and bands of mercy round the heart, and by the attractive influence that he puts forth in the name and Person of Jesus, draws the soul to his feet, brings it near unto the Lord as he sits upon his throne of grace, communicates strength and power to plead with him as a man pleadeth with his friend, and in due time reveals him as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

But we must ever bear in mind that it is to those who feel their deep and daily need of Jesus that the invitations of Scripture are addressed: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Ho! every one that thirsteth come to the waters." The blessed Lord dropped these invitations to those who were weary and heavy laden that they might come unto him and find rest and peace by faith in him; and thus he spoke to those who were thirsting for salvation, to come unto him that they might drink at the fountain head, and receive the blessedness of his full and finished salvation into their heart. As then the blessed Spirit is pleased to send those and similar invitations home with warmth and power into the heart, he kindles faith to receive them as from the mouth of God, and thus draws it forth into

living exercise upon Jesus; for the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ according to our Lord's most gracious promise, and makes them known to the soul. Sometimes, for instance, he takes of his glorious *Person*, Immanuel, God with us, shows to us his glorious Deity and suffering humanity, and discovers him as sitting at the right hand of the Father, and thus "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Sometimes he is pleased to show us the efficacy of his *atoning blood*, that it cleanseth from all sin; at others he graciously discovers the fulness and completeness of his *obedience* to the law of God while here below, and that it is a perfect righteousness in which we near stand before God without spot or wrinkle. As, then, he reveals and manifests these precious things of Christ to the soul he raises up a living faith whereby Jesus is sought unto, looked unto, laid hold of, and as he is pleased more or less to manifest himself, he is brought into the heart with a divine power there to be enshrined in its warmest and tenderest affections.

ii. But in coming unto Jesus, the soul comes not merely for present help and comfort, but to *enjoy all the blessings and benefits of his death and resurrection*. Thus it comes to him as a living stone to be built up in him as the foundation which God has laid in Zion, that it may grow up in him as a living stone of the temple of mercy. It comes to him not only with a burden of guilt upon the back which he alone can take away, but that he may always continue to be its Sin-bearer; it comes to him not only with a wound in the conscience which he alone can cure, but with an infinity of leprous sores which will ever want the healing touch of his gracious hand; it comes to him at first without help or strength, and ever continues through life looking to him to make his strength perfect in its weakness. It comes to him helpless in the beginning, that through him help may come; and never

ceases to feel its helplessness, that day by day it may learn that God hath laid help upon one that is mighty. And as it comes to him hopeless, that through him hope may be communicated; and as perishing, that in him it may find life and salvation; so all through its Christian pilgrimage it hangs upon him for fresh communications whereby its hope may be maintained and the power of his salvation enjoyed. Thus as this blessed Spirit goes on to deepen his work, and to discover more and more of the suitability, beauty, blessedness, blood, and obedience of the Lord Jesus, he draws the soul more and more unto him, and the more it closes in with him for life and acceptance, the more it finds pardon, peace, and salvation, through his blood and love. This coming, therefore, unto Jesus is not an act once only done which needs never to be repeated. We must be always coming unto him, for he is our "life," and we only get life as we do come unto him. He is the way, the only way unto God. As then we are always backsliding, we need our backslidings to be continually healed, that we may be ever walking in him as the living way; and as we are continually wandering out of the way through the power of sin and the temptations of Satan, we need to be restored to the path of peace. So that to come unto Jesus is not an act once done in our spiritual life which needs never to be done again; as if having once come unto him and found acceptance in him we may lie upon our oars, for the tide is sure to carry us into harbour; as if having gained one victory we need never fight again, but may go into winter quarters for the rest of our days. So far from that, we shall find that fighting is only then just begun. As then we are continually sinking, we want continually to rise; as we are continually slipping, we want to be continually held up; as we are continually sinning, we want to be continually forgiven. Thus to come unto Jesus is more or less a daily act; nor is there any maintenance of the light, life, and power of God in our souls, except as we are daily coming

unto him as the living stone, and continually living upon him as the bread of life.

II.—But to come to our second point, our blessed Lord is here represented to us under a most suitable and heavenly character: he is called the "*Mediator of the new covenant.*"

I. God in several instances has made a covenant with man. He made a covenant with Adam in Paradise; he made a covenant after the fall with Noah; he made a covenant with Abraham; and he made a covenant with the people of Israel by the mediation of Moses at mount Sinai. But though some of these covenants, as those with Noah and Abraham, were intimations of the everlasting covenant, what is usually called the covenant of grace, yet others, as being made with man, were essentially and necessarily fragile; for man, in his own strength, was unable to keep their terms and conditions. Foreseeing, therefore, what man would be, and foreviewing the fall and its miserable consequences, God made before all time what Scripture calls an "everlasting covenant" ("through the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. 13:20); what David calls a covenant "ordered in all things, and sure." (2 Sam. 23:5.) This covenant was made not with man, but on behalf of man; for it was made between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is called, therefore, "an everlasting covenant," as having its origin in eternity. This covenant is often called the "new covenant," in opposition to the old covenant which was given at mount Sinai; and it is called "new," not that it was a new thought in the mind of God, a new idea that sprang up in his heart, that because the children of Israel could not keep the old covenant he would give a new one of which he had not thought before, which he deemed, perhaps, they might be able to keep; but it is called "new" because it was revealed later in time. The old covenant was revealed through Moses at mount Sinai; but the new covenant, though there were intimations of it in the very early dawn of

Scripture, though every type and figure of the Levitical law pointed to it, yet is called new as being revealed subsequently in point of date, and only brought clearly to light in the Person and work of Jesus.

ii. But the apostle has an especial reference here to the prophecy given by Jeremiah, and the tenor of which he had already quoted: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." (Jer. 31:31.) The Lord here promises he would make a new covenant; and the apostle, quoting this prophecy of Jeremiah in the 8th chapter of this epistle, says, "Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." This new covenant then is "the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," revealed and brought to light in the Person and work of the Son of God. Of this new covenant, this better covenant, this everlasting covenant, sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son of God, Jesus is "the Mediator;" so that in coming to him in the actings of living faith, we come to him as the Mediator of the covenant of life and peace.

Now this new covenant had four promises attached to it, and by coming unto Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant, we come into the present enjoyment of these four promises. They are these: I shall go through them in order that I may show you from them the blessedness of this new covenant of

which Jesus is the Mediator.

1. The first promise of the new covenant is, *"I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts."* The law of mount Sinai was written upon tables of stone; and as an index that they could not keep that covenant, though written by the finger of God upon those tables, Moses threw them down in indignation when he saw the people dancing round the golden calf. Their being thus broken indicated that though written by the finger of God, man could not keep them nor hold them without breaking them. When, then, God would make a new and better covenant, he would not write the terms of that covenant upon tables of stone any more; nor should they be written upon parchment or paper; but he would take a new way: he would write them upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. But how does God fulfil this promise? He plants his fear deep in the soul, according to his own words: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." As, then, the believer comes to Jesus in the actings of living faith, God puts forth, so to speak, his finger and traces upon the tablets of his heart the fear of his great name, whereby his conscience is made alive and tender. Upon this soft and tender table, this new heart, this new spirit, this heart of flesh, which he gives when he takes away the heart of stone, he writes also his promises; for the promises of God are given to be helps and encouragements to the saints as they travel through this vale of tears; and as the blessed Spirit applies the sweet promises of the new covenant to the believer's heart, it is as though God himself wrote them with his own finger upon his soul. In the same way God also with his own finger writes his truth upon the heart of his believing people; for he makes the truth known to them by a divine power; and this truth he inscribes, not upon tables of stone, but upon the heart of flesh, the tender spirit which he himself raises up; so that his truth is received

into the believing heart and becomes the joy and consolation of the soul. Upon this new heart which he gives as a part of the new covenant, he writes also his precepts that we may obey them, walk before God in all holy obedience, live to his praise, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. Is not this, then, one of the sweetest promises of the new covenant, that God himself has promised to put forth a secret power in the consciences of his people whereby he writes the terms of it upon their heart, in letters never to be blotted out? Jesus, as the Mediator, takes this promise, so to speak, out of God's hand, and makes it good by writing his laws and his precepts upon the hearts of his loving and obedient people.

2. But there is another promise equally sweet, which is, *"I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people."* Here God the Father, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has promised to be a God to all his believing people. Enlisting upon their behalf all his perfections, he gives himself over to them in all his divine characters and all his blessed relationships; his power, his greatness, his mercy, his love, his compassion, his tender kindness; in a word, what he is as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. What heart can conceive or tongue express what he is in that most blessed character; that most gracious and eternal relationship to his dear people? Every mercy and blessing are freely and unalterably theirs on this ground, that he is their God. But why their God—their God by covenant, their God by promise, and their God by power? Because he is the God of Christ, their covenant Head. As the Lord himself said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John 20:17.) "All things are yours," says Paul. Why? Because "ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:22, 23.) And as in Christ he has become their God, so are they become to him his people. In every way he has made

them his. He has redeemed them by the blood of his dear Son; justified them by the free imputation of his perfect obedience; sanctifies them by the communication of his grace; and will eternally glorify them in the day of Christ's appearing. In this present time-state he is their kind God in providence to supply all their temporal wants; in all their straits and difficulties he watches over them with the unerring eye of infinite wisdom, and upholds them by the mighty hand of infinite power. Whatever be their foes or fears; yea, though he bring them, as the third part, "through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried," yet when they call on his name he will hear them and will say, "It is my people," enabling them to answer, "The Lord is my God." (Zech. 13:9.)

3. The third promise of this "new covenant" is, "*They shall not teach every man his neighbour* and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." To this promise the Lord seems to have special reference when he said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." As being, therefore, taught of God himself, they shall not want human instruction to enable them to know the Lord, for he shall so reveal and manifest himself to them that they shall not need earthly teachers, for he himself by his Spirit will guide them into all truth. It does not mean that they shall not need a preached gospel or not require spiritual teachers, for the gospel is ever to be preached to the end of the world, and amongst the good gifts of God are "pastors and teachers." (Eph. 4:11.) But they shall not be dependent upon them, for they shall have a better Teacher, as well as a clearer, sweeter, and more powerful Instructor. This promise, therefore, is in blessed harmony with John's declaration, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things;" and again, "The anointing which ye have received of him

abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." (1 John 2:20, 27.) This unction from the Holy One teaches all the saints of God, from the least to the greatest. Thus, in this promise of the new covenant, God himself has undertaken to teach all his redeemed and regenerated people. It is as though he said in it, "Under the law they had instructors and teachers; but they did not profit them. They did not come through them to any true knowledge of myself. Now, therefore, I myself will take them in hand. They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest; for I will reveal myself to them. I will give them my Spirit to lead them into all truth. There shall not be anything good for them to know which shall be kept back; for I myself will give them such manifestations of my grace and glory that they shall all know me as their God, their Father, and their Friend: yes, from the very least to the very greatest of them, all shall enjoy for themselves that eternal life wherein consists in the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

4. And then, not to detain you longer on this point, comes that sweetest and most blessed of all the four promises of the new covenant: "*I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*" This promise embraces in its blessed arms the pardon of all their sins, the forgiveness of all their iniquities, and declares that these shall be so completely blotted out that their very remembrance, so to speak, shall be removed from the mind and memory of God.

Look, then, at these four promises: they are all yours, if believers in the Son of God; they are all your happy and enduring portion if you have been brought by the Holy Ghost to mount Sion—to the city of the living God; they are all addressed to you who are come or who are coming to Jesus,

the Mediator of the new covenant.

iii. But let us now look how Jesus is "*the Mediator of the new covenant.*" I have already shown you that the new covenant was that which God made with the Son of his love before time had birth or being. In order, then, that this new covenant might not fall to the ground in the same way as that made with the children of Israel at mount Sinai, God made Jesus the Mediator of it: he put it into the hands of his dear Son to execute. We being fallen sinners, it was necessary that there should be a Mediator between God and us, for "there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5.) This Mediator is the "Daysman," for whose appearance Job longed as one who "could lay his hand upon us both;" that is, lay one hand upon God as the Son of God, and the other upon man as the Son of Man. Thus our blessed Lord as this Daysman holds the new covenant in his hand, having pledged himself to execute all its provisions. When he came upon earth, he came as the Mediator of this new covenant, that by his perfect obedience to the holy law of God he might bring in a righteousness for the justification of his people; when he died upon the cross, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, he shed his blood as "the blood of the everlasting covenant:" and when God raised him up on the third day, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, he placed him there as the Mediator of the new covenant, that he might ever hold it, so to speak, in his hands, righteously administer it, fully execute it, fulfil all its provisions, and make valid all its promises. Here, then, is an object for your faith—Jesus as a living Mediator of the new covenant at the right hand of God. We are often pressed down with doubt and fear; darkness, guilt, and bondage again and again take hold of us through the strength of sin, the power of temptation, and the assaults of Satan. We desire to approach unto God; but how can such

vile sinners as we are draw near to the pure Majesty of heaven? Here then is an Object for our faith if it be in any measure drawn out into living exercise. God has given us a Mediator between himself and us. In and through him he has laid aside his frowns and has arrayed his face in smiles. He says, "Look not to me as an angry Judge, a consuming fire. Look at my dear Son: he is the Mediator of the new covenant. He ever mediates between me and you. I am too holy, too just, for you to deal with; but here is the Son of my love whom I have set upon my holy hill of Zion, as a Mediator between God and man." To him, then, you may look; upon him you may cast all the weight of your weary soul. And to assure those who, in their feelings, are often at the greatest distance from God through guilt and fear, the Lord himself speaks as if from the courts of heaven, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22.) We often fail here, and the reason is, because we do not fix our eyes upon the true, the only Object of faith. But when faith is drawn forth into living exercise, how blessed it is to look unto Jesus as Mediator of the new covenant; to see what the new covenant is, how ordered in all things and sure; what blood it holds forth to cleanse us from all sin; what a glorious righteousness to justify our needy, naked souls; what promises it contains of pardon and peace. When, then, we can look at Jesus with the eye of faith as the Mediator between God and man, and see how he lives at God's right hand to make this covenant effectual, how every glimpse of his glorious Person, every view of his beauty and blessedness, with every sweet promise applied, every answer to prayer given, every intimation of mercy vouchsafed, strengthen and nurture the new man of grace. As, then, faith looks to and hangs upon Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, it rests upon him to execute it, apply it, and make it good. A sweet confidence thus springs up in the heart that

he will not suffer any one part of it to fall to the ground, but will thoroughly accomplish it to the glory of his great name. Now what I want to impress upon your mind is that being such a Mediator, as such we must be ever coming unto him; as such we must be ever pleading these promises with him. We have sins to be forgiven which he only can forgive; iniquity to be pardoned which he alone can pardon; backslidings to be healed which he alone can heal; lessons to learn which he alone can teach; mercy to be obtained which he alone can bestow. As, then, we live under the warm impression of these divine realities, it will be our daily mercy and wisdom, under the teaching of the Spirit, to be ever coming unto Jesus as the ever living Mediator of the new covenant; and as we are enabled more and more to do this, we shall find that in it are stored up all our happiness and all our holiness, all our hope in time and all our salvation for eternity.

III.—But we now come to a very important and blessed part of our text, for in it the child of grace is spoken of as having come by faith to the "*blood of sprinkling.*"

I. But what is *the blood of sprinkling*, and *how* do we *come* unto it? There is an allusion here to the sacrifices offered under the law and to what was done with the blood. When the victim was killed, it was not sufficient for the blood merely to be poured out at the foot of the altar, but it was "sprinkled upon the altar round about." (Lev. 3:2.) This sprinkling of blood was therefore a necessary and integral part of the sacrifice. It was so, you will remember, on that ever memorable night in the land of Egypt when the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled upon the lintel and side posts of the houses of the children of Israel. It was so when Moses consecrated the people: for, as the apostle says, "Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses

had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people." (Heb. 9:18, 19.) In the same way he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. It was so in a more solemn manner on the great day of atonement, when the high priest took the blood of the bullock and the goat within the veil and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy seat. It was so in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, for we read, "And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron and upon his garments and upon his sons." (Exod. 29:21.) It was so in the cleansing of the leper, for he was to be sprinkled with the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water seven times; and it was so also in the cleansing of the leprous house. (Lev. 14: 7, 51.) In fact, without the sprinkling of blood there was no cleansing, and therefore the apostle says; "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) Now all this speaks to us in type and figure, and points to the blood of the everlasting covenant, the blood of Jesus—here called the blood of sprinkling. But in three different points of view may the blood of Jesus be called "*the blood of sprinkling.*"

1. First, when our blessed Lord was nailed to the cross, when the nails were driven through his sacred hands and feet, and the spear pierced his side, blood was sprinkled: it sprinkled his holy body as well as the cross on which it was fastened according to the determinate counsel and purpose of God. Not a bone of his holy body was to be broken, but there was an absolute necessity that his blood should be shed; for "the life of the flesh is in the blood, and it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. 17:11.) Unless,

then, the blood of our blessed Lord had been actually shed, there could have been no atonement made for sin: the sacrifice would not have been a perfect sacrifice. As, then, when the typical sacrifice was offered, the blood of the victim was sprinkled upon the altar, so the cross, which we may view, in a sense, as the altar on which the Lamb of God was sacrificed, was sprinkled with the blood which Jesus shed as an atonement for the sins of his people. In a higher sense, his Deity was the altar, for it was that which gave virtue and validity to the blood of his humanity; but in a lower sense we may view the cross as the altar also, for on that the sacrifice was offered at Calvary. As then the blood of the burnt offering was to be sprinkled round about upon the altar (Lev. 1:5), that it might be looked upon and unto as actually shed as a propitiation for sin, so the blood of Jesus was sprinkled all about his sacred body that the eyes of God and man might look unto it and upon it as a fountain opened in his holy humanity for all sin and uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1.)

2. When the high priest went within the veil on the day of atonement, it was "not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." (Heb. 9:7.) But as we read that the high priest previously made an atonement for himself and his house as a sin offering, in which the blood was put upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense, as well as poured out at the bottom of the brazen altar (Lev. 16:11; 4:7), it is evident that the blood was twice sprinkled, for we read that it was "to be sprinkled seven times before the Lord before the veil of the sanctuary," as well as put upon the horns of the altar. Thus it was sprinkled first as a sin offering before the veil, and then taken by the high priest within the veil and sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat. It was not sufficient for the bullock and goat to be slaughtered outside the veil, and the blood sprinkled before the eyes of the people and of the priests, but it must be taken within the veil

and sprinkled in the holy of holies, in the immediate presence of God sitting between the cherubim and filling it with his manifested glory. So our blessed high priest not only shed his blood upon the cross and sprinkled it there before the eyes of men and angels, but taking it in his risen body up into the holy of holies within the veil, in a sense sprinkled that blood upon the pavement of heaven—in the very courts of bliss, on and before the mercy seat, the throne of grace; for he is still our High Priest, ever presenting before the eyes of his Father the merits of that blood as our Advocate and Intercessor.

3. But there is a third sense in which it may be called "*the blood of sprinkling*." As Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people when he consecrated them unto God and thus made them "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6); and as when he consecrated Aaron and his sons to be priests he sprinkled the blood upon them also; so the Holy Ghost takes of the atoning blood of the Lamb and sprinkles it upon the consciences of God's regenerated people. It is by the application of this blood to the conscience that guilt is removed. Therefore the apostle says, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." (Heb. 10:22.) And again, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. 9:14.)

ii. Now it is to this blood of sprinkling to which we are said to *have come*. But we come to it only in the actings of a living faith. When, then, we first come to the foot of the cross as poor, guilty sinners; when there we see the agonising, suffering Lamb of God, then we first come to the blood of sprinkling, for there was shed his precious blood; there it ran

down from his feet and hands and side. But when looking beyond the cross and the sepulchre we get a view of a risen, ascended, and glorified Jesus as the great High Priest over the house of God interceding within the veil, as our advocate with the Father, and see the efficacy of his precious blood as pleading for it in the very courts of heaven, then in a second sense we come to the blood of sprinkling. And when the Holy Ghost is pleased to purge our conscience by the application of this atoning blood, then again we come unto the blood of sprinkling, or rather, it then comes to us. This indeed is the only true way to know for ourselves that that blood was shed for us, and that we have an interest in it, so that all our sins are cast behind God's back. In this way only "have we boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." (Heb. 10:19, 20.) O may we know what it is ever to be coming to the blood of sprinkling, for in that alone is all our hope and help, our only title to heaven, our only salvation from the wrath to come!

IV.—But this blood, to come to our last point, is said to "*speak better things than that of Abel.*" The apostle here refers to what we read in the book of Genesis, after Cain had risen up against Abel his brother and slain him. Cain thought that Abel's blood would be hid; but it had a voice and cried out to God from the ground for vengeance against him. The blood of Abel could not be hidden. It had been shed and the dust had covered it; but the dust could not hide it from the searching eye of God. "And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." (Gen. 4:10.) Thus this blood kept crying to God for vengeance upon Cain; wherever he went it still pursued, crying "Blood for blood." Cain therefore went out from the presence of God a condemned man; and though the Lord set a mark upon him that none might kill him, yet he lived and

died under the wrath of God as Abel's murderer. But the blood of Jesus speaks *better* things than that of Abel. The blood of Christ cried unto God from the ground as the blood of Abel cried. Murderers rose up against Jesus. Wicked Cains surrounded the cross, and in a sense shed the blood of the Son of God. This crime Peter charged upon their consciences: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23.) But our blessed Lord prayed for his murderers, and we have reason to believe the prayer was answered, and that many of those who imbrued their hands in his precious blood by crying aloud to Pilate, "Crucify him! crucify him!" were saved by the very blood which they virtually shed. In a sense we are all murderers of Jesus. It was not the nails nor the spear that killed the Son of God. Our sins—these were the nails; our iniquity—this was the Roman spear. But this blood, instead of crying out against us condemnation and wrath, cries mercy, pardon, peace, acceptance, salvation, and deliverance from the wrath of God. And it is ever crying aloud for mercy. As the blood of Abel kept crying out for vengeance against Cain until Cain sank under its accusations into hell; so the blood of Christ will keep crying for mercy until every soul interested therein is saved up into heaven. As then we come unto the blood of sprinkling it is ever crying "Mercy, Father, upon the transgressor; pardon, Father, for the rebel; salvation, Father, for the lost." Thus its voice is ever crying to God for blessings to fall upon all who come to it to receive salvation by its being sprinkled on their conscience.

Here, then, is a simple description of the believer in Christ drawn by an unerring pen—that he has come and is ever coming unto "Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." And shall he come in vain? Will he and all his

petitions be rejected? Does not the Lord himself say, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?" If you, then, as a poor, guilty sinner, are coming unto Jesus, to the Mediator of the new covenant, will he spurn you from his feet? If you are coming to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, will it cry out against your sins or cry for pardon for them? Will your sins prove your ruin? Must you sink under the wrath of God, so justly your due? No; the very fact that the holy Spirit is leading you to Jesus as the Mediator of that new covenant, all the promises of which are pardon and peace, and to look to the blood of sprinkling, are certain testimonies that God himself is drawing you by his Spirit and grace—not to kill you as a Cain, but to bless you as an Abel by putting you into living possession of the blessings which flow through that blood.

But this atoning blood is not for the Cains, the persecutors, who in heart slay the people of God because they can no longer slay them by hand. It is not for the despisers of Christ—those who say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But it is for the poor, humble penitent; the tried and timid believer; the sighing child of God, who is yearning for a sense of manifested mercy. For him it was shed and on him it will be sprinkled. As washed in that blood he now stands accepted in the Beloved, and as sprinkled upon his conscience he will be able to say, even in nature's last sinking hour, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"