

Text: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren,
that through this man is preached unto you the
forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe
are justified from all things, from which ye
could not be justified by the law of Moses.
(Acts xiii. 38,39)

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It is not so much what might be called a set sermon
that I shall attempt to preach this morning, but, as the
Lord may help me, to endeavour to open up the truth of
these two verses by taking them in connection with other
verses in the chapter, and, in that particular way,
proclaiming the truth of the gospel of our most blessed
Emmanuel. God has raised up for poor ruined sinners a
Saviour - one in our nature and also in the nature of God;
in His divine nature co-eternal, co-existent, and
consubstantial with the Father; in His human nature like
unto His brethren in all points, sin excepted.

So we read that God "raised up unto them" - that is,
unto Israel - "David to be their king; to whom also He
gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of
Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all
my will. Of this man's seed" - that is, of David's seed -
"hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a
Saviour, Jesus" (verses 22, 23). Christ is "the root and
the offspring of David" (Rev.xxii.16). David came from
Him, was made by Him, so that Christ was David's God. Thus
Christ is David's root. Christ in His human nature came
from David, not by carnal generation, but by a miraculous
conception. The Apostle declares, in his epistle to the
Romans, Christ "was made of the seed of David according
to the flesh" (Rom.i.3).

It is also declared, as before mentioned, that He
was given according to God's promise: "Of this man's seed
hath God according to His promise." What particular promise
is alluded to here? Evidently that one in II Samuel: "And
when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy
fathers. I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall
proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom.
He shall build an house for My name, and I will stablish the
throne of His kingdom for ever" (vii. 12,13). Literally,
this refers to David's son Solomon. Prophetically, it was
a glorious foreshadowing of David's more spiritual seed,

through the agency of the Holy Spirit upon the woman, the virgin Mary. It foreshadowed the building of Christ's house - that is, His church - and the establishing of the throne and kingdom of Christ for ever and ever. Who but Almighty God could have constituted and raised up such a Saviour as Christ? And who but Christ Himself, the glorious Son of God in our nature, could ever have fulfilled the whole will of God by keeping the law (Matt.v.17), suffering for sin (I Pet.iii.18), making an end of sin, making reconciliation for iniquity (Dan.ix,24), becoming a propitiation for sins (I John ii.2; iv.10), and thus bringing into peace with God sinners who were previously at enmity (Col.i. 21,22)?

In verse 27 of our chapter we read: "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him." Christ came into the world not "to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii.17). He came to pardon poor sinners, to save them from the degradation of the fall (Col.ii.14; I Cor. vi.11). He came, as we read in another part of this book, to bless them, to turn them away from their iniquities (Acts iii,26), to deliver them from their misery (Col.i.13), and to do them good (Jer.xxxii.40). And yet, for all this, so implacable and malicious were His enemies, that they condemned Him and asked Him by what authority He did such things (Matt.xxi.23), condemned His person as being a contemptible man, low-bred, a despicable creature, and as being a monstrous deceiver for presuming to call Himself the Son of God. They condemned His acts, though He went about from day to day doing good, and nothing but good (Acts x.38). He wrought mighty miracles - raising the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, turning water into wine, feeding the multitude with a few loaves and fishes. Yet, I repeat, they asked Him with a sneer, with malice boiling in their hearts, by what authority He did such things. They condemned His words, though He spoke nothing but what He had seen with His Father; they sought to kill Him because His word had no place in them; and because He told them the truth they believed not. He asked them, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me? (John viii.46).

Why did they condemn Him? Because, as you have heard in this 27th verse, "they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets." They stumbled over the mystery of His person, the mystery of His doctrine; they stumbled

over the meaning of their own prophets, and over the counsels and purposes of God as revealed by His prophets and by His apostles. And so it is now - never more so, perhaps, than in this day. The word of God is gainsaid; and where it is not gainsaid, it is rent, torn, and distorted in order to support human creeds and dogmas and the false hopes of man's carnal mind. Whatever agrees with reason is the only creed of multitudes of professors. And as for the ungodly, the non-professing world - by their iniquities, oaths, blasphemies, and awful transactions, they are fulfilling every day what the prophets foretold about them (Jude 15). Men are departing "from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (I Tim.iv.1).

Verse 28: "And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain." Take particular notice - no justifiable cause! Their consciences told them that He ought not to be crucified, yet, out of malice, they desired Pilate that He should be slain. As though they said: "We cannot endure the wretch amongst us any longer; His blasphemies keep us continually miserable. And, beside all that, He is a most seditious character, and He is winning upon the minds of increasing numbers; and, unless we put an end to His awful and evil career, we shall always be miserable." Therefore they said, "Crucify Him, crucify Him! and then we shall have rest and quiet."

Verse 29: "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre." They could not go any further than that. All the devils in hell, congregating together and uniting their most consummate wisdom to prove their power, can do nothing beyond what God suffers them to do. All the infidelity, all that the Pope is doing, and all that ever has been done in opposition to the power of the gospel, has only been done in accordance with "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii.23).

Verse 30: "But God raised Him from the dead." If Christ had been guilty of such lying, blasphemy, and wickedness as He was charged with, the God of heaven would have been the first to know it, the first to condemn Him, and would never have raised Him from the dead. His enemies charged Him with such atrocities as had never been laid to the charge of any man before, Yet their own consciences condemned them, and told them plainly that Christ did not deserve the death which they inflicted upon Him. As He lived, so He died, God's perfect Servant - holy, harmless, and undefiled. God

raised Him from the dead, so that the resurrection might be an open attestation of His work and of God's acceptance of it; so that it was the will of God that salvation should be preached to poor sinners through His death and resurrection.

Therefore, said the apostle (verse 26): "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." To all this congregation here this morning the word of this salvation is sent. And if I had twenty thousand people - of all sorts, all characters, yea, the very worst and vilest in London - I would tell them that to all of them is the word of this salvation sent: that is to say, salvation is to be proclaimed to all! The proclamation is entirely different from the application. The application belongs to God and is nothing to do with me.

What a blessed word this is! "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Oh, if we are really concerned, through the Spirit's work in our hearts, about our eternal welfare, then what reason we have to be thankful to the God of all grace that He is a sin-pardoning God! "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses" (Dan.ix.9). Forgiveness is His sole right and prerogative. As the prerogative of pardoning a condemned criminal rests in the bosom of the Queen, so the exercise of pardon for the sinner belongs only to God. Angels cannot pardon you, a minister that preaches to you cannot convey this forgiveness. None but the very God against whom we have sinned - that just God, that holy God - can pardon us. God is our salvation (Psa.lxviii.20), and we, poor, miserable, penniless beings, are dependent upon God's free mercy, and redemption by Christ Jesus is the only way in which our sins can be blotted out. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isa.xliii.25). Oh, what a mercy it is, then, to be brought to understand this through the teaching of God's blessed Spirit in the heart! "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom.iii.24,25).

This is the grand secret of Christ's atonement, poor, miserable, condemned soul, you that have many fears. May

God help you to understand this - that, if Christ has borne the penalty of sin in your stead, that penalty can never come upon you. If Christ has drunk the cup of your rightly-merited damnation, it is certain that you will never have that cup to drink. Here is the glory of the gospel. Upon this the dear martyrs died; upon this the dear apostles of Christ died triumphantly. Did you ever see the honey drop from the honeycomb? Why does it drop? Just because it is full. And so pardon flows through Christ out of God's heart because God is so full of mercy.

If I am speaking to some poor, tempted, cast down souls here this morning - who have been saying to themselves: "Alas! there are surely no sins like mine, no transgressions so black as mine, no iniquities so aggravating as mine" - God help you, poor soul, to believe His word, to hear it now from my mouth. It is to such as you that God speaks, and He says: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18).

I can tell you this morning whether you will be pardoned or not, whether you are pardoned or not. Say you, "That is just what I want you to do." Follow me closely in one or two particulars.

(1) Thousands of people appear to believe that God gives pardon upon false ground. He never did, and He never will do this. The characters I speak of are Pharisees: they depend a great deal upon themselves and little or nothing upon Jesus Christ. They dwell upon the surface - I mean the letter of God's truth - and scarcely that. They are like that Pharisee in the temple, who stood and said: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, or even as this contemptible creature, this publican. I have always lived and behaved better than he; I have done my duty and said my prayers evening and morning. I am not like this man." Now if I am speaking to any here this morning who belong to that class, I tell you solemnly that God will never pardon you experimentally so long as you remain so blind and ignorant; for such arguments as I have just mentioned can issue only from those who are destitute of God's love. And they know no more about divine pardon than did that Pharisee in the temple.

(2) Now follow me again. A real child of God comes before the Lord like this: He says: "Lord, I am a sinner; I am vile;

my sins are great, they are numberless. Lord, I tell Thee the real truth: I do feel I deserve hell as much as any man that ever sinned against Thee. I have no power to help myself; I have no righteousness of mine to believe in; I once thought I had, but I now find that I have not. I dare not rely for a moment upon any work of mine, dare not look to anything to give me the least hope, but to the blood and righteousness of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ. Oh, Thou great God, wilt Thou pardon me for Christ's sake? Wilt Thou grant that my sins may be washed away, every stain obliterated, my great debt cancelled? Great God, deliver me from the law and its curse through the infinite merit of Thy Son's sacrifice."

Now, then, poor soul, if you are led like this, it proves that you are led by the Spirit. You must be. It is not "may be" or "perhaps." You will say, "I do want to be led like this, but I often feel many doubts." I say that, if you are led like that, you must be led by the Spirit; and if you are led by the Spirit, you are sensible of your need of forgiveness. God says that your sins are all put away, and He will cause you to feel the pardon of your sins. He says that all your sins are scarlet and crimson, and He makes you to feel them as such; yet He puts them away (II Sam.xii.13), casts them behind His back (Isa.xxxviii.17), into the depths of the sea (Micah vii.19), the sea of His love. It is through this man, this blessed God-man, through His perfect obedience, His spotless life, His meritorious death, His triumphant resurrection; because He has finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, destroyed death and him "that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb.ii.14); because He has "ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto me" (Eph.iv.8); because He is now glorified at the right hand of the Father, where "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb.vii.25). "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

I often think of this, and I ask God to help me to carry it out in practice at home. It would be far more profitable than taking up the time so much about other people and this or that particular point. Sometimes I am led at home to do what I am doing this morning - that is, to take a glorious truth of the gospel and preach that. Although I am doing it now with felt weakness, yet I have a voice in my conscience which tells me that I am preaching the gospel of the grace of God - the very essence of the gospel, "the forgiveness of sins."

Though, when Christ was brought before Pilate, no cause of death was found in Him, there was a secret purpose of God that He should die (Acts ii.23); otherwise we poor sinners could never have been saved, God's elect could never have been brought out of the fall. God sent Him into the world that salvation through Him should be proclaimed to all alike - preaching being made a means in the hand of God, in all ages of time, for the calling of His people out of the world, making up the number of His elect, and so hastening the time when the whole church of God shall be brought "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph.iv.13).

How beautifully the apostle speaks (verses 34 to 37) of Christ's humanity being impervious to that corruption to which our human nature is susceptible after the spirit leaves the body! "And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption (Psa.xvi.10). For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption." And so you and I will see corruption.

In another place, the apostle says: "The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom.viii.10). I take this to mean that the body is subject to corporeal death because of sin; but in the case of a believer, a redeemed and saved man, he is delivered from all condemnation and is a partaker of eternal life. But, I repeat, he must die as another man; he must come down into the grave, unless he should be alive when Christ comes, and then he would be instantly changed (I Cor.xv.51) - the equivalent of dying.

Christ's body never saw corruption. He did not die by a necessity of nature. Some think entirely different. Bishop Pearson, a great divine of the seventeenth century, contended for the mortal humanity of Christ. I contend for the immortality of Christ's body.* The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God in our nature. He took this humanity upon Himself and gave up His own life "for sin" (Rom.viii.3); it was a voluntary surrender; "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John x.18). Had He lived millions of years in the world, His life could not have been demanded

* See Mr. Philpot's review in G.S.1859, on the adjective "Mortal."

by a necessity of nature. His death was a voluntary act. God raised Him from the grave, and the Father, so to speak, said: "Come in, Thou blessed Son; Thou hast grandly consummated My work; all the infernal spirits Thou hast subjected to our authority in such a way as could not otherwise have been accomplished" (Col.ii.15). The gates and doors of heaven are, as it were, personified. The cry is triumphantly raised: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" (Psa.xxiv.7,9).

Oh, what a blessed gospel! "Justified from all things"! If you have a living faith in Christ - no matter what things there may be in you, no matter what threatening things there may be in your life, no matter what sins you may remember which tend to give you trouble (though these things will be sure to oppose and perplex you) - I repeat, if you possess a living faith in Christ, God's word says you are "justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Time prevents me from going further into this as I wish; but before I bring my remarks to a close, let me mention the solemn warning of the apostle: "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (verses 40, 41). Nobody dislikes more than I do the ascribing of any power to the creature. Nothing but God's grace can save a sinner, make him willing to be saved, bring him really and truly to repent of his wickedness. But, whilst God's grace must do all this, I tell you something that the sinner can do without God's grace; and God holds every man accountable that does it (Eccles. xii.14). God will judge him. A man can despise and trample down the gospel and abuse it. Millions will find themselves in hell for having trampled upon the gospel of Christ. Oh, with what despitefulness of mind would a condemned criminal trample upon his own death warrant if he could! So these characters have trampled upon the gospel of Christ. In this day God's blessed name is blasphemed, His gospel looked upon with contempt, and His warnings and threatenings laughed at. But God will have a word with these characters by and by.

No man or woman shall ever prevent me from declaring the solemn warnings of God in His word. I will not be stifled by a man. "Turn you at My reproof... Because I have called,

and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you" (Prov.i. 23-27).

Mark this: refute my words if you can: these things I hold and preach. A day is coming when God will take all the vain pretences and flimsy arguments of men and dash them to pieces before their eyes (Psa.ii.9; Rev.ii.27). This is the solemn word of Christ Himself: "If any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii.47,48).

So, you see, it must be the grace of God to bring about what is pleasing to Him - repentance, coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation. Yes - and nothing but the grace of God will ever bring despisers of the gospel to hear its glad tidings. Thousands of people are trying to distort the word of God, trying to make it mean what it does not mean; but soon God will weigh men "in an even balance" (Job xxxi.6). by His omnipotent power. Then there will be no more cheating, no more undermining in business, no more blasphemies, no more wrong doings. Those who have despised and blasphemed His word will be cast out into that kingdom where there is nothing but "wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.xiii.42,50). But you, poor repenting sinner, will stand before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and God will give you a blessed welcome into His kingdom (Matt.xxv.34).