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SUBSTANCE OF SERMON PREACHED BY MR. C. HEMINGTON, AT GOWER STREET
CHAPEL, LONDON, ON SUNDAY MORNING 9th OCTOBER, 1892

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Text: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph.ii.12,13).

The dear saints of God differ as much in their practical course of sin before being called by grace as they do in faith, knowledge, and experience after God has called them. Before being called by the grace of God, they are all dead in trespasses in sins, and after being called they are brought nigh unto God by the blood of Christ; so that, whatever difference there may be between them in respect to their faith, knowledge, and experience, there is no difference whatever with regard to their death in sin and their nearness to God, being brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now it always does us good, if we are really taught by the Spirit, to look back to what our former state was when we ourselves were dead in sin - to our state of unregeneracy; and the Lord by His Spirit will lead us back - He will make us look back to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged (Isa.li.1). I am sure it does us, as believers in Christ, a great deal of good when the Spirit helps us to see what God has done for us, to believe that we are not dead sinners now, but children of God; not on the way to hell, but on the way to heaven; not strangers, foreigners, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, but that we are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph.ii.19).

May the blessed God, then, help us for a little time this morning, in a sober and thoughtful manner, to speak-

First, a little of what the apostle calls "that time," and consider what our condition was at that time.

Secondly, of our present state as believers in Christ, being now in Christ Jesus, and made nigh unto God by the blood of Christ.

Thirdly, make a few remarks upon the blood of Christ; and when I speak of the blood of Christ, I refer to it as giving infinite satisfaction to divine justice - a great truth, a great doctrine.

I. That Time. First, let us look at what the apostle calls "that time". You observe that the apostle does not here give any particulars respecting what kind of practical sinners these Ephesians were - though we know, from the Acts of the Apostles, that they were idolaters, sunk down in the grossest form of idolatry, that they used enchantments and divinations, and made a regular business of the wicked art of necromancy. But here the apostle merely says: "Ye were without Christ." So, in our own case, some of us in our unregeneracy may have indulged in one kind of practical sin, and others in another kind. Some may have committed very desperate sins compared with the sins of others; some may have lived more morally than others. You know best what sort of sinners you were, and I know what kind of sinner I was - a wild, thoughtless, gay, world-seeking, vanity-seeking, profligate, licentious young man. But this one text belongs to all of us "Ye were without Christ." And it is that one thing, being without Christ, which, according to Scripture, makes a man's state before God to be a damnable one. I wish that thousands of professors understood that better than they do. You see what it is that makes a man's state to be damnable. I do not want to hurt the minds of my young friends behind me, but I wish to consider their interest and to say a little to them: the poor harlot that walks the streets of the city, the drunkard that is rolling from one pothouse to another, and the most disreputable characters to be found in the lowest parts of London, are no more in a damnable state than are my young friends behind me as long as they are without Christ. That is the language of my text. A man's condition before God, if without Christ, is a damnable state. Our poor minds turn chiefly upon our practical sins. Whenever I find myself in a solemn mood, and am led back to reflect upon my life, I invariably find that my mind turns upon my actual sins - what bad things I did, what bad words I said, what pernicious habits I acquired, what evil courses and ways I ran into. And I have no doubt that the Spirit of God has a hand in this, directing our minds in that way, and causing us thereby to say with Mr. Hart (if we do not use his very words, the Lord will bring us to make that confession in spirit):

"My God, when I reflect
How, all my life-time past,
I ran the roads of sin and death
With rash impetuous haste,

My foolishness I hate;
My filthiness I loathe;
And view, with sharp remorse and shame,
My filth and folly both. "

(775)

This wonderful, very brief but very terrible description - this declaration by the apostle - stretches over the whole period of our unregeneracy - "ye were without Christ." And that one declaration by the apostle condemns us altogether just as does that other declaration of his: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom.iii.23) - a statement which the Lord has made great use of in my own experience, and it has helped me a good many times in preaching God's truth. It is not whether you have sinned little or much; it is not whether any of us have gone to great lengths in sin or not; it is not whether we have cursed or sworn; it is not whether we have gone to the harlot's door, or whether we have done other disgraceful or disreputable things; nor is it whether you have lived a very discreet and moral life. Paul says: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Now it would be inconsistent with the character of God for Him to admit of created beings like ourselves becoming associated with Him for ever, and at the same time to come short of His glory. Therefore, if we are ever brought into His favour and so spend eternity with the blessed God - Father, Son, and Spirit - His glory must be secured in our salvation. You know I make a great point of this in my ministry. This is one of the greatest and most searching questions, and needs to be honestly answered: Are you in Christ? You know how one of the hymns has it:

"What think you of Christ? is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him." (1149)

Am I in Christ? Why, you will say, you are a minister of the gospel; we believe, and have believed for years, that you are in Christ. Well, am I in Christ? Are you in Christ? You young people here this morning - whether you belong to the school or not - are you in Christ? You Sunday school children, you that have capacity enough to follow me at all in my remarks (I am merely putting the question, and may the Lord help you to consider it): Are you in Christ? You old people with grey hairs, you that have sat in this chapel for years and are well up in all the Calvinistic doctrines which constitute the creed of the place: Are you in Christ? But some that are here this morning may say: "We have never been so bad as some, we have never been so wicked and so profligate as many". Some young man may say: "I never steal, I would not rob my master of a fathing, I am honest in my situation." And some young woman may say: "I never tell any falsehood, I never act in a way of dissimulation towards my father or mother." And some of the Lord's people may say:

"We have never fallen into any scandalous sins, we have never wallowed in any filthy abominations." Others may say: "We have been from our very childhood discreet and moral, and have always behaved ourselves properly." All such remarks - and such remarks are often made - are an evasion of my question: Are you in Christ? Mark the apostle's words: "That at that time ye were without Christ." There they were, and there were you, you that are children of God here this morning; and there was I some years back - in this world. We had the same bodies, the same hands and feet, the same minds - that is, as men and women naturally considered - but we were without Christ. What an awful thing it is to be without Christ! But what a distinction the Scripture makes between being in Christ and being dead in sin!

II. Made nigh. The apostle John says: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (I John v. 19) - that is, in the wicked one. You see then that, in regard to such as are taught this truth by the Spirit of God, it would be an utter impossibility for them, supposing they were ministers, to be Arminians or legalists; because they know that by nature they were all dead in trespasses and sins, blind, far from God by wicked works, and "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. iv. 18). "He that walketh in darkness ... knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John ii. 11). Well, then, it must be the infinite and eternal God, by His own omnipotence, His own invincible power, Who alone could completely change such persons in their character and habits, and so transform them as to constitute them real believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at the apostle's language: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. i. 18-20). The apostle here is giving us to understand that the same exceeding greatness of God's power which was put forth when the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead is also put forth in every instance when God quickens His elect into life. In the second chapter of this epistle Paul says: "And you hath He quickened" (verse 1). Now has God done it? It does not say that, when God created this world, He put forth the exceeding greatness of His power. I do not say there was no putting forth of His power; but it is not said that God put forth the exceeding greatness of His power. God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." You see that which God meant instantly sprang into being at His word. But in quickening the

dead sinner into life there must be the exceeding greatness of God's power. Oh, what a truth it is! "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph.ii.8,9).

Dull of Hearing. And I tell you what I am greatly afraid of: that this and other truths of God are having comparatively very little effect upon people's minds in the present day; I cannot see that they are - and I mean upon the minds of numbers of God's living children. I often tell my own people this at Devizes. Sometimes I say: "Now look here: I can tell by your countenances that you are not hearing me; your minds are wandering." Now here is the awful truth - solemn, mighty, blessed, eternal truth - of the Three-One God; it is a truth which will crush us if it does not save us. If we are not built upon Christ, that mighty Stone, that Stone will fall upon us and grind us to powder. And yet, as I sometimes says to my people, very little effect, as far as I can judge, does the truth have upon many of your minds; you are comparatively so little exercised in the things of God. I have to grieve over my own sottishness, to mourn over the little power of God I seem to feel upon my own heart. Yet I feel there is that in God's truth which I do love. O, to be right with God! But I must not dwell upon this any longer.

The Call of Abraham. "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." This requires a very great deal more explanation than I can give it now. But, you see, God elected one nation. He took Abraham and organized his descendants into what is properly called a theocracy. God was their King. It was a chosen people, a chosen nation, designed of God to be typical of the working out of His eternal purposes through Christ Jesus in the salvation of His elect. I have many times been profoundly struck with the whole of the past dispensation, have been obliged to say that it is really quite impossible fully to dive into it, and have had to cry out with Paul: "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom.xi.33). Here were these Gentiles left of God to walk in the vanity of their minds, and there they were sunk down in such superstition, vice, and uncleanness that it would not be proper for anyone to mention. In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans there is some reference to these things. Those who are acquainted with heathen history, and have looked into the works written at the time referred to, know that the wickedness was of such a nature that it could not be dwelt upon in detail. God permitted all that. "The times of this ignorance God winked at (Acts xvii. 30). They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, not

allowed to partake of the privileges of the nation, kept at a distance, "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But see what the apostle says now, at the time he addresses this epistle to them. You see they were, by the grace of God, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

The glorious Chain of Truth. I will pass on at once to speak of this. How blessedly the apostle does go into his subject in this chapter. After having reminded the Ephesians of their former state of unregeneracy and wickedness, and that, whilst in that state, they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and that they all had their conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others - then the apostle proceeds to take up the distinct links in the great and glorious chain of God's eternal purpose of bringing about the salvation of His people, through the redemption of Jesus Christ. The apostle, at the same time, follows his thread of thought beyond time; he follows it throughout the countless ages of eternity, in which the infinite God will ever be showing His boundless kindness, love, and mercy to the people He has chosen. Now let me give it to you in the apostle's own words: "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (verses 4-9).

My dear friends, let people quarrel with what is called Calvinism as much as they may - and people are quarrelling with and hating Calvinism more and more.

A Caution to the Young. My young people down at Devizes, the children of some of my members, when they grow up to fourteen or fifteen years of age, begin to say: "Father, I do not care about going to that Old Baptist Chapel twice a day. I have no objection to go in the morning, but I should like to go to church in the evening or to the Congregational Chapel. They are going to have a nice flower service this evening, and we like to go in the week, for they have recitations, music, and solos." And so the young people go on. But now, my young people, may God keep you to this place; and should you, in His providence, go to live anywhere else, may He incline your minds to go where your parents would wish you to go! I would that God might impress your hearts

with the importance of keeping to where His truth is preached! Beautiful flowers or a solo will do you no good on a dying bed. Natural men, deluded by the god of this world, will cling to anything. I have no judgment to pass upon any man. The great and distinguished man that has just passed away*, according to what I have read, grasped to the last a copy of Shakespeare's works. I said to myself: "God help me in my departing moments not to want Shakespeare, but to want Christ. I had rather be an idiot in an asylum than be Poet Laureate, honoured with all the plaudits of a nation, than to die without Christ." Oh, it is a blessed thing to be taught the truth, and to love to go where the truth is preached.

III. The Blood of Christ. But now, though people quarrel with Calvinism, here it is. That is what I often say at home: "It is in the Bible; here it is in this chapter." Therefore, people that quarrel with Calvinism quarrel with the distinguishing doctrines of grace and quarrel with God; and between God and them the quarrel must be settled. So, when the apostle says, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ," he points out what God does for His people by virtue of Christ's blood. That is how you must understand it. Sinners are made nigh upon the ground of that infinite satisfaction which the blood of Christ has given to the justice of God; because God's glory in our salvation is thus eternally secured. The blood of Christ is not to be regarded as though it were the blood of a mere man. Such a thought is utterly derogatory to God's glory.

Satisfaction to Divine Justice. The humanity of Christ was united to Deity, standing in mysterious union with the Person of the eternal Son of God; the Deity gave infinite validity, power, and efficacy to the shedding of Christ's blood upon the cross. His Deity made His blood what it is, and His atonement gave infinite satisfaction to God. All the perfections of Deity are maintained and vindicated by and through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because God's glory in the salvation of His people is secured thereby, we are "brought nigh by the blood of Christ." Paul says: "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love" - that is, you see, God is of Himself rich in mercy, and God is of Himself great in love. I mean that the blood of Christ has not made God rich in mercy nor great in love. The blood of Christ has satisfied the injured justice of God - injured by the sins of His people - and His blood has cut a channel for grace to flow in all the ways that the apostle speaks of in this chapter.

* Lord Tennyson died on the previous Thursday (October 6th. 1892)

A Channel for Grace. Follow me closely, and I will not detain you long. The atonement of Christ has made a channel in which divine grace can flow; first, in quickening His dead elect into life and saving them by His grace; secondly, in giving them real saving faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; thirdly, in constituting them, by all the effects of His grace upon them, to be God's own workmanship; and fourthly, by constraining them through His divine power to live godly and to show forth the praises of God for having called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Two Extremes. Thus, in the language of the apostle, we have the two greatest extremes that could be conceived - extremes which utterly confound the minds of men and of angels, extremes which none but the eternal and infinite God can fully comprehend. Here they are: "Ye who sometimes were far off" - that is one extreme, as far off as they could be; and here is the other extreme: "Are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Sin had removed us as far from God as it was possible for us to be removed. And let me tell you that the devils in hell have not been carried away from God farther than mankind have been. But the difference between devils and ourselves is that God has made no provision for their recovery, whereas He has made a merciful provision for the recovery of His own elect sons and daughters. There is the difference. Just as sin had carried us as far from God as heaven is from hell, so the blood of Christ has brought us as nigh to God as Christ is to the Father (John xvii.23).

Living Experience. Let me say this: How very few of God's living children in the present day fully realise their standing in the grace of God, their relationship to God! O that God would be pleased, if His gracious will, to bring His own dear children (whom He has brought nigh unto Himself by the blood of Christ) to know more blessedly for themselves their standing in and nearness to God. The devil sometimes gets a great advantage over us; and it is wonderful how, through the goodness of God, I go on from day to day in the blessed confidence and assurance of my standing. But at times I get withered up; the devil quite stops my mouth - I mean in prayer. I was a good deal tried yesterday. I felt I could not pray, as if I had no words to utter, and I rose up from my knees condemning myself. But in less than five minutes, when I sat down, not at all in the form of praying, I found myself praying; yet what it was that gave the spring of prayer in my soul I cannot say. I had been on my knees trying to say something to the Lord; for I knew that I had to preach today, yet could not say a word. There was no power, no feeling, no springing up, no drawing out

from this wretched, miserable heart; and in a moment, as it were, I began with this sort of prayer: "What a wretch I am, Lord! I wish I could pray. Oh, raise a cry in my soul! Let me feel Thy Spirit. Lord, lead me into Thy truth." Well, you see, that is common with all the people of God, and will continue to be in us until we die. But I do want more real faith, and I have no doubt that many of you feel the same.

"Faith in the bleeding Lamb,
O what a gift is this!
Hope of salvation in his name,
How comfortable 'tis!"

(792)

I will just conduct you over the apostle's connection, and then I will close. "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Here I must again warn any of you young persons that have the fear of God in your hearts: take heed of a vague notion in your minds about that blood; do not think of it as mere animal blood; do not let that miserable notion possess or become predominant in your minds. It must be understood as being an infinite sacrifice which Christ offered unto God in offering Himself. Christ Himself must die; He stood in our place as our Surety. Therefore He must take upon Himself our responsibility, and He must negotiate with God. He must be God as well as man, and therefore, when Christ shed His blood, it was the pouring out of His soul unto God (Isa. liii. 12). "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38).

The Application to the Conscience. And the application of this blood to the conscience is felt when the Spirit of God works a living faith in the heart, when the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is thus enabled to receive the atonement in the power of it, and to rest his soul's salvation upon the wonderful sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is then a sufficiency of the Spirit's witness to enable the believer to say: "I do believe that I am saved, that Christ is my Redeemer, and that He has brought me nigh unto God by His own precious blood. I have nothing else to rest upon. I do feel the truth of Christ to be very sweet, and His atoning work to be very blessed." Now that, I say, is an application of the blood of Christ to the conscience. You are not to expect something miraculous, something outward, and quite supernatural. An application of the blood of Christ to the conscience is when we are led by the Holy Spirit to take the atonement of Christ into our hearts, when we are helped to rest our hope upon it, and have some feeling that we shall be saved by that, and in no other way. "For He is our peace."

Amen.