

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. C. HEMINGTON, AT GOWER STREET CHAPEL, LONDON, ON SUNDAY EVENING, 2nd OCTOBER, 1892.

Text: "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for My sake; let not those that seek Thee be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel. Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face" (Psa.lxix.6,7).

The Intercession of Christ. Primarily and strictly, this is the prayer of Christ for His people. Did He pray for us? When He said: "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed," did He pray for you and me? Because, if He did not, we shall never be saved. Speaking for myself, and speaking according to the way I have long been led to understand God's truth, I have for years believed that all who are saved are saved in answer to Christ's prayers for them, and that all must be saved in that way. I feel that otherwise there is no salvation for me. Christ says: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (John xvii.9). What are your prayers and mine? What are the prayers of the holiest and best of men that have ever lived in the world? They are full of imperfections. Every prayer is defiled, and there is sin enough in each to damn us. How, then, can such prayers save us? How could God, consistently with His justice, save us according to such prayers? He never could do so were it not for the prayers of Christ. Has this matter ever taken up your mind and impressed you? Whatever your prayers may be at any time - no matter how much fervour, sincerity, or liberty you may feel; no matter how many groans and sighs may accompany the words you speak to God - do you ever feel that God could never pay the least attention to anything you say, or save you in answer to it, were it not for the prayers of Christ? There was no defect whatever in His prayers - no insincerity, no formality, not a speck of defilement, nor the least fault. When He was here in the world as the perfect Servant of God, as Mediator doing the will of the Father, and being God and man, His prayers were full of merit. What a very blessed portion of the word that is in the chapter which I read this evening, where the apostle says that Christ "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb.v.7). God heard Him for His own sake. God hears us, if we are His living children, for Christ's sake. Every word which left Christ's mouth entered the ear of God. Every word and every prayer which Christ poured out before God will be answered to the very letter. If, then, we pray acceptably to God, we must pray in Christ's name and plead His merit before God; and if He hears and answers our prayers, which He will do if we are

led by the blessed Spirit to pray in Christ's name, then it will be for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, not for the sake of our poor prayers, because our prayers have no merit in them. They all need to be washed in the blood of Christ. Do you feel that? Has the Lord made you see and feel the iniquities of your unholy nature? I am often greatly troubled about the iniquities of mine. Here I stand in this pulpit - a solemn position for a man to be in - here I stand, professedly as a servant of the most high God, desiring to use my tongue and my lips in proclaiming the everlasting gospel. Moment by moment, and word by word as I go on with this service tonight, I feel that every word I speak needs washing, and that, such is the defilement I contract in preaching to you the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, unless some provision is made to remove that defilement from me before the great Judgment Day, I have committed sin enough in this pulpit to damn me for ever. Does the Lord make you feel that? The heart is the centre of your unholy nature. I want to be interested in the prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Sufferings of Christ. The bitter waters of divine wrath poured down in torrents, rushing like a cataract emptying itself into the soul of Christ. And what was it for? The sins of His people. (I trust that my remarks from these verses will have some proper bearing upon the very solemn ordinance of divine institution which the members of the church here will this evening partake of). I say these bitter waters of divine wrath rushed into Christ's soul on account of the sins of His people. Their sins, guilt, and ruin were as the deep mire; the wrath of God which went out against these sins was as deep waters. Hence Christ says: "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (verse 2). How little do we understand of the magnitude of the sufferings of the Son of God! How little do our minds take in as to His awful death upon the cross, and what He suffered when He was hanging there, a spectacle to angels and to men, and when He cried: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He said: "I am poured out like water;... My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels... Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death" (Psa.xxii.1,14,15). How little do we enter into it! The sufferings, death, and resurrection of God's dear Son constitute the ground of every believer's hope. There is no hope for a sinner elsewhere. Thus we find Christ speaking in the same psalm (lxix) of the malice of His enemies and of their acting in all their designs from wrong motives and corrupt principles. He says, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head" (verse 4). He never gave, all the time He was in the world, any just cause for the hatred which was poured out upon Him. On the

contrary, He "went about doing good" (Acts x.38) and was ever ready to show pity to the suffering and to help the needy.

The Imputation of Sin to Christ. Then, in verse 5, Christ prays to Jehovah His Father, and He makes a confession in His prayer which some would think to be the height of blasphemy to apply to the Lord Jesus Christ. I would speak cautiously upon this. He says: "O God, Thou knowest My foolishness, and My sins are not hid from Thee." Some would say: "It is quite revolting to apply such a passage to the Lord Jesus Christ." I do apply it to Him. The psalm is prophetic; it contains the utterances of the God-man. You must remember, in reference to this and other declarations which prophetically belong to Christ, that He is here speaking as the head and representative of His people. He was their mouthpiece to God, and spoke of their foolishness and their sins as if they had been His own. You know, my beloved friends, that the very foolishness and sins of His people were imputed to Him. (Isaiah liii.6); and He was treated with the very same severity of punishment as if He had been guilty of those sins in His own Person.⁺ God "spared not His own Son" (Rom.viii.32). Divine justice laid upon the back of Christ every stroke which the sins imputed to Him deserved, and divine wrath emptied to the very last drop all its vials into His sinless soul. When Christ cried: "Save Me, O God," our sins were not hid in a corner. God knew, before we were born, what our sins would be, the very greatest and the worst of them. And when the divine act of imputation took place, Jehovah the Father transferred to Christ all the sins of His people. He took those sins freely, and, out of infinite love, He plunged voluntarily into the deep waters of divine wrath and made complete atonement. Upon that ground He says: "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for My sake: let not those that seek Thee be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel." Poor soul, do you really wait upon the Lord? And are you ashamed of yourself and of your own foolishness, and sometimes afraid that God will put you to shame - that He will reject you, that He will cast you off as a contemptible and an abominable branch? I say that shall never be. It is impossible - that is, if you wait upon God in a godly sense. Mark once more what Christ says: "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me (verse 9). My mind has recently dwelt a good deal upon this truth: our sins, if we are God's people, were imputed to Christ, and all the wrath which was due to us because of our sins fell upon Him. I do love that truth. O that God would help me to walk in the power of it every day!

+ See Hymn 119, verses 3,4,5.

Everything in yourself, everything in your life that makes you ashamed of yourself (and for which God, were He to deal with you according to your sins, would be obliged to pour His wrath upon you) - I say, all that fell upon Christ, and

"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine." (227)

Therefore, says the blessed Mediator, "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for My sake."

Two Kinds of Shame.⁺ Well, says the poor soul, I am ashamed for all that. Shame covers my face and fills my soul. Often, when I approach unto God, I view my own base heart and say:

"'Twas He Who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair." (295)

How is it, says the poor soul, if Christ prayed for me that I might not be ashamed, that I should have so much shame, and be borne down so as to be scarcely able to lift up my head? I will tell you; because it is the will and the way of God with all His people. God says by the prophet Ezekiel (pay attention to what God here declares): "I will establish My covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God" (Ezek.xvi.62,63). Let me tell you that this shame will continue - that is, gospel shame will continue to be an ingredient in your experience, child of God, as long as you live. It is the will of God that it should be so, and Christ meant nothing contrary to this when He said: "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed." Well, then, says the poor soul again, what did He mean? First you tell us that Christ prayed that His people might not be ashamed, and then you tell us that it is the will of God that they should be ashamed as long as they live.

My dear friends, we are to understand it as though Christ had said: "Father, do not let any of those who, by My Spirit and grace, wait on Thee be so ashamed as to find that they are wrong with Thee through My work having failed to accomplish that for which I died. Let them not be confounded for My sake. But let them, for their own sake and for their own iniquity, be ashamed of themselves and of their own evil ways as long as they are in

+ The shame of contrition (Ezra ix.6); the shame of perdition (Psa.xl.14).

the world." That is what Christ meant. Christ bore reproach for the sake of satisfying divine justice; for the sake of keeping, honouring, and magnifying the law of God; and for the sake of securing the glory of God in the salvation of His people. So that, you see, it comes to this: Christ has borne the guilt and sins of His people, and all the wrath of incensed justice that was due to those sins. "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John.vi.38).

The Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ. He was in this world as a Servant. I love to look at the character of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Servant. And I love to consider Him as the exalted Son of man and Son of God at the right hand of the Father. It is very blessed when the mind is solemnized and led to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in His humiliation. Speaking of Himself, He said: "I am a worm, and no man" (Psa.xxii.6). He was "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah liii.3) - set at nought by the people. Here He was in this world, the Father's coequal and coeternal Son. What a wonderful thing, living amongst men and day after day with His eye single every moment to the glory of God! As God, He knew perfectly well what was before Him - the visit to the garden of Gethsemane and His awful death at Calvary. He also knew that that beautiful scripture would be fulfilled in His own experience - I mean, where He says: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him" (Psa.cxxvi.6). And again: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psa.xcvii.11). You know what the prophet says as God's mouthpiece: "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. liii.11).

The Incarnation. Let us look for a few moments at that miraculour conception in the womb of the virgin. O profound, sublime mystery! As one says:

"I love the Incarnate Mystery,
And there I fix my trust" (1095).

Just pause upon it for a moment. Here, you see, was a daughter of Adam, with a nature as defiled as that of any other woman. Here, without the agency of any human being, the Holy Ghost caused that woman to conceive, and then in due course that woman gave birth to a child. You know, from the sacred record, what painful cogitations took place in Joseph's mind. But God said: "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt.i.20). And the angel Gabriel had previously testified:

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i.35). So she brought forth a child, and He was called Jesus.

The Trinity concerned in Salvation.⁺ Now, then, from the moment that He was born into this world, all the eyes of the angelic host were upon Him. But not only so. In His divine nature He is a Person in the ever blessed Trinity; for, though I speak of Jesus on earth as the Servant, I do not divide the Persons of the Godhead and so destroy the unity of the Trinity. Therefore, although He who was on earth was both God and man, He was at the same time in His Deity in heaven (John iii.13). Therefore, the blessed Trinity had Their eye upon Him in the womb, and from the womb, step by step, as He passed through life until He was hanging upon the cross. Then all that bitter and incensed wrath of God was poured into His soul in order that, by His death upon the cross, He might redeem His people from death.

For what, and for whom, Christ prayed. Now upon this ground He said: "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake." As though He had said: "Do not let them be confounded; do not let them remain in death; let them not continue walking according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; let them not die children of wrath even as others." In this sense we understand the words: "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for My sake: let not those that seek Thee be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel."

You see, we are saved in answer to Christ's prayers - most blessed prayers - for His church and people. What a prayer is that in Chapter xvii of the gospel by John! Where is the well-taught man of God that has not found comfort in some of the expressions of our Lord's prayer as recorded in that chapter? What a wonderful oneness between God and His people! How Christ prayed for their unity: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (verse 21). How He prayed for their preservation here in this world: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil (verse 15). How He prayed for their eternal glorification: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me" (verse 24) And He said: "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (verse 22).

+ See Hymn 34, verse 2

The Believer's Longing for Heaven. The psalmist Asaph prayed like this: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psa.lxxiii.24). How much do you know about longing to die and go to heaven? I sometimes get that feeling. I had rather a singular dream about two or three nights ago. I do not attach much importance to dreams unless they bear some good evidence of being from God. But I would not speak lightly of them, for I believe that God does now sometimes speak by dreams and visions of the night (Job xxxiii.15-17). I can only say I am much more frequently distressed in my dreams than in years gone by. They are generally very unprofitable dreams, sometimes very wretched, and sometimes of a nature not to be mentioned. But the other night I dreamed I was with the Lord, and I had a relenting spirit, a soft heart; my spirit was wonderfully subdued, and my heart was strongly going out to the Lord. These words came to me as distinctly in my dream as ever any words came to me when I have been awake (bear in mind, I am simply relating a dream): "I shall be like Him, for I shall see Him as He is." I had been very poorly, and, only just the day before, a remark was made to me by my companion in life about my going down to Manchester in response to their pressing and repeated invitation; and I said, "Well, I feel, if it were not for you, I should like to die and leave all, for I am getting weary of life; I should like to die and go to heaven." I do indeed feel that it is little of life I have to live.⁺ And then this dream came.

Changes. Often, since then, the devil and unbelief have been busy; evil thoughts, like a swarm of bees, have been busy. And so, my dear friends, we prove that "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer.x.23). But blessed be God for His unspeakable gift of the Lord Jesus Christ!

For My sake - For Thy sake. Look once more at the words of our text: "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for My sake; let not those that seek Thee be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel. Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered My face." You see the turn which the Lord's words take. Here, first, He says: Let not My people be ashamed for My sake; do not let them be confounded for My sake; do not let their sins be brought against them for My sake; do not let the law inflict its awful penalty on them as the wages of sin for My sake. He does not say "for My sake" any further than that.

But He also says: For Thy sake, O Jehovah, I have borne reproach; for Thy sake I have taken the nature of this people;

+ Mr. Hemington lived eleven and a half years after this; he died on 30th April, 1904.

for Thy sake I have taken the Servant's place; for Thy sake I have endured to the very last all the malice of the wicked; for Thy sake I have suffered My face to be besmeared with blood. "I have trodden the winepress alone" (Isa.lxiii.3). I have fought with principalities and powers and overcome them (Col.ii.15). I have vindicated all the perfections of Deity, I have reconciled justice and mercy and righteousness and truth - yes, for Thy sake I have caused these perfections to embrace one another. Therefore, says Christ, Seeing that, for Thy sake I have borne reproach, now for My sake let nothing in the way of wrath be upon My people. "Shame hath covered My face."

The Final Triumph of Christ. Blessed be our Emmanuel, He has put an end to all this for **ever!** Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Rom.vi.9,10). He is no less the God-man now than He ever was. His dear face (if you and I could see it) would not now be marred more than that of any man (Isa.lii.14). It would be a lovely face; the same blessed face of the dear God-man when He dwelt amongst us is now exalted in His glory.

God's Witness until the End. He is only gone before. God's people are kept in the world for His own glory - in order that God may have His witnesses here to the end. The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, has not seen fit to call out all the redeemed, or to make up His entire family, in one period of time. He settled it in His own eternal mind, before the foundation of the world was laid, how long the world should last, how many thousand years it should continue; and decided that, in the working out of His great purpose, He would never be left without witnesses in the world. "I will," He says, "have a people in the world age after age" (See Matt.xxviii.20). When all His people are called out, and called home, the Lord will destroy this world.

What a thing it is, then, to know Christ - to have a true and living faith in the Son of God, and to have the testimony in our own consciences, that "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess.v.9).

May the Lord give His blessing, and make His truth a blessing to your souls, for Christ's sake. Amen.