

SERMON III.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 30th, 1876.

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."—ACTS v. 31, 32.

IN the morning we took a little notice of how God the Father had exalted Christ, and that with His right hand, that in "all things He should have the pre-eminence." As the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father He claims the right—"I and my Father are one." We noticed how exalted He was in the estimation of poor sensible sinners, what they thought of Him, how exceedingly precious and all-glorious was their Beloved, that they could indeed say, "He is the altogether lovely;" how they prized a look from Him, a word, a touch, it was to them more than thousands of gold or silver. They could say, "Lord, lift Thou upon us the light of Thy countenance, and that will put more joy in our hearts than ever the wicked knew when their corn or wine increased." How they, in their feelings, would crown Him Lord of all, and say, "None but Jesus, none but Jesus." We noticed His character; "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince." We noticed that He is the Prince of life so far as regards our natural life, it is "in Him we live, move, and have our being," for He has the keys of hell and of death; we noticed that not a single shaft could fly till He gave leave. We noticed how He raised the dead to prove that He was the Prince of life; not only of our natural life, but He is the Prince of life spiritually. He is the fountain of grace; not a spiritual desire, not a heavenly motion, not a longing or look, not an earnest breathing is there in our souls but flows from Him, for it "pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." We noticed if ever we have received out of that fulness He will crown that grace with glory. We noticed how death separates all other connections, however close, even soul and body, but there is no separation from a vital union with the Christ of God; "Because I live, ye shall live also." If we can draw the least satisfaction by the witness of the Blessed Spirit that there is life in our hearts, it proceeds from Him who is the Fountain of Life; we noticed that life is hid with Christ in God. We noticed that He is not only the Prince of life, but He is the Prince of Peace; He has made peace by the blood of His cross.

There is no peace worth having but what flows from the Christ of God; He reconciles poor sinners to God the Father, taking our hand, and putting it in the hand of God the Father, as the Mediator between God and men. "This Man shall be our peace when the Assyrian shall come into the land." He takes our hand as Man, and God's hand as God, and so makes peace. He is the Prince of Peace in that He has reconciled Jews and Gentiles together. What opposition the Jews shewed to Gentiles, they called them dogs and desolate. You know the woman of Samaria said to the Blessed Son of God, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." They were not allowed to come beyond a certain distance in the temple of God. Now Christ has reconciled Jew and Gentile together

in one body by His cross, and preached peace to them that were far off, that is, the Gentiles, and to them that were nigh, that is, the Jews. Not only that, but He brings peace into our conscience, whereby the soul is enabled to feel, "This God is my God for ever and ever;" so removing the filth and guilt of sin from our consciences by the sprinkling of His precious blood, whereby we realize what was said when He came on the earth, "Glory to God in the highest; and, on earth peace and goodwill towards men." All attempts to make peace in any other way than what Christ has made it will prove vain and empty; He is the peace-maker, the peace-giver, and the peace-bringer; unless you have that peace that flows from Him, it is a trick of the devil. Look from what quarter your peace comes. We know the delusions of men, we know how blind priests and blind people are deceived, I have been witness to some of their deeds; when men and women have been on a sick bed, a carnal and blind priest has come in with the bread and wine, and said to them, "Are you at peace with all men?" And they have said, "Yes." "Then take this;" and it has been given to them as a passport into heaven; but nothing will pass those pearly gates but consciences sprinkled with blood. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." If you die without peace in your conscience by the shedding of blood, you will not enter heaven, but you will find tribulation and wrath. Therefore, as I just said, "He shall be our peace." When that peace is brought into the conscience it passes all understanding. Therefore, says the Son of God, "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace."

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince." Not only the Prince of life and of Peace, but He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. Therefore, in the Psalm that we read, we noticed, "All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." Hence it is said "He is King of kings, and Lord of lords;" for He can do and does do on the behalf of His people what no other kings can do. You know that when several of the kings of Judah were about to die, they gave to their several sons great gifts of gold and silver, but they gave the kingdom to their firstborn; they only had the kingdom of Judah at their disposal, therefore they gave gifts to their other sons. You read of King Ahasuerus, which made a feast to his princes and nobles an hundred and fourscore days, and great rejoicing and wonderful feasting there was, for all the vessels they drank from were of gold and silver, and the beds were of gold and silver, and so forth, but he had no kingdom to give. Now the Blessed Son of God is Prince of the kings of the earth; if He gives life He will give eternal life; if He gives a kingdom He will give one that cannot be moved; if He gives glory, He will give a crown of glory; if He gives us an inheritance, He will give us one that is incorruptible, and that fadeth not away; this is what He gives to all His children. Although we may not believe it, He has as many kingdoms as there are stars in the firmament, every one that shall inhabit them will outshine the sun in his glory. He is Prince of the kings of the earth. What petty kingdoms are theirs; the longer they live the less time they have to live; the number of days you have spent, the fewer you have to spend; it is not so with the Prince of the kings of the earth, a thousand years with Him are as a day, or as a watch in the night. He leads His people to living fountains of water, and wipes away all tears from their eyes. If He is Prince of the kings of the earth, you need not fear what men can do. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Therefore you need not be "afraid of a man that shall die, or of the son of man that shall be as grass, and forget the Lord thy Maker. All nations before Him are as nothing, he taketh up the

isles as a very little thing. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers in His sight." "I will have it so;" and it is done; angels fly at his bidding, and ten thousand wait upon His nod. He can nod men into hell, or speak them into bliss. Hence we find in His greatest weakness He overcame the greatest power; He "spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly," when He hung on the cross, He made the devils tremble, hell in fear, the earth shook, and the sun hid his face. Then you need not fear. What are we? Sons and daughters of this Prince. Then there is no other nobility worth anything, it is only a show or a name. The greatest king could not put the King of Terrors on one side, he has been a terror to many; no man dare mention it in their presence. Christ is Prince of the kings of the earth; as such there is no real dignity, except to these sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; as He saith by Paul, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Those that suffer with Him shall reign with Him;

"Thus through this world of trouble
His saints in safety go;
They count this world a bubble,
All vanity below."

Why? Because they are allied to Him. As he is Prince of the kings of the earth, all nations are at His disposal; then you need not fear but He will take care of you. You read that when Abraham stood up at the death of Sarah to ask for a burying place of the children of Heth, they said, "Thou art a mighty prince among us, in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead." What was Abraham to this mighty Prince I have just been speaking of? Did not the children of Heth withhold the chiefest of their sepulchres from him, because he was a mighty prince? nor shall earth or hell withhold from the children of this mighty Prince anything that shall do them good. He sits on the circle of the earth to take care of these heirs of promise; as He is heir of all things they are heirs of promise. O could we but with clearer eyes see what we are, what grace has made us, what an interest we have in Jesus Christ, we should not be so often full of care as we are. As I sometimes say, faith never fears a famine, it is unbelief fears that. Whenever faith lays hold of the Christ of God, she can see that all things are at His disposal; you can go to Him whatever is your need, whatever obstacles may present themselves, and whatever the devil may suggest. Mind this, the devil will always aim to sink the Blessed Son of God in thy estimation; he will say, "How can this man save you? if He be the Christ of God let Him come and do it." Though they cried out, "If Thou art the King of Israel, come down and we will believe;" He was the King of Israel nevertheless, although He would not come down to satisfy them. Though you may say, "If He is Prince of the kings of the earth, why am I thus?" "He giveth no account of His matters." Peter asked Him concerning John, "Lord, what shall this man do?" "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." They said to Him at another time, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?" "It is not for you," said He, "to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." Notwithstanding thy fears, "If He is all this (you dare not doubt it, you have not got unbelief enough to question it,) why does He not help me?" "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power; but He has told you, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He has told us He will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" therefore you may "come boldly to a throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." He is Prince of the kings of the earth. If you notice, the apostles said, "We are witnesses of it; we know it is so." But to pass on.

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour." He might be all this I have just spoken, and a thousand times more which I have not said; all this would avail nothing to you and me unless He is a Saviour. Now, He is not only exalted above all blessing and praise, but He is a Saviour to save poor sinners. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." "Wherefore, also, He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." Now, then, whatever are thy sins and transgressions, however many and mighty, He is able to save to the uttermost. Notwithstanding men have committed damnable sins, hell-deserving sins, have broken God's law in thousands of instances, and every one proclaims condemnation to them that do so, they have never gone to a thousandth part of his "uttermost" yet. His blood is so mighty, his merit, his obedience, his righteousness is such that we can neither comprehend nor apprehend it; we may taste it and have a little feeling of it. Here is comfort, poor sinner; let thy sins be as many and great as they may, although in your feelings they may be like mountains, yet while the blood of Jesus Christ can and will cleanse poor sinners from sin, and make these black, devil-like men and women milk-white saints, you need not fear. I will tell you what He can do, however great and many your sins may be, dropping into His precious blood, they will only be as sparkles of fire falling into the sea, they are quenched in a minuté. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a cloud, and thine iniquities as a thick cloud, and wilt no more remember thy sins." He has said it; He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hence, when He gave up the ghost, He bowed His head, and said, "It is finished;"

"Holy Ghost, repeat that word, full salvation's in it."

If the Holy Ghost brings it into your heart it will send you home a happy man or woman, whatever fear you may have been in on account of your sins. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, it is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, who ever liveth to make intercession." What is thy sin to His great grace? God has exalted Him. This makes Him dear and adorable in the eyes of poor sinners, He can save them, He is willing to save them; He died to save them, and lives to save them; and will bring them home to God, as trophies of His blood, that they may sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, to Him be glory might, majesty, and dominion." Here is a Saviour. "O, say some before God, "His ability I do not question, the efficacy of His blood I do not question, but will He save me? am I the man, am I the woman, He will pick up and take to heaven?" I will tell you who He will save, see if you can come in. I have just hastily set forth the greatness of this salvation, and that no sins can be too great, most of you may not question that, but it is whether your spot is the spot of God's children. "O that He would save me, wash me, take me to heaven; O, that He would look in pity and compassion on a poor wretch like me." That is the desire, the sinking, and misgiving of some before God. I will tell you, He will save the humble person, the man that has got low eyes, that sees himself the most unworthy, and most unprofitable, that says in his feelings, "Will He look upon such a dead dog as I?" Yes, He will; you cannot be too base for Him.

"Sinners can say, and none but they,
How precious is the Saviour."

How true are these words of dear Hart,

"Sinners are high in His esteem."

Is that all?

"And sinners highly value Him."

What a fit, isn't it? What a coming together! What blessed union! While He embraces them, they embrace Him; while such are dear to Him, He is dear to them, so there is no love lost between them. As I just said, He will save the humble person. Hast thou low eyes? What do you think of yourself? honestly, without any canting hypocrisy, or lies, How have you felt and seen yourself at times? "Well," say you, "God that searches all hearts, to whom I am transparent, knows that at times I have seen and felt myself the least and the last." Then you are just the man; there is nothing in God's word against you, it all runs in your favour. "Surely it cannot be so," you may say. Harken to His Word, "He lifteth the poor out of the dust, and beggars from the dunghill, and setteth them among princes, and causeth them to inherit thrones of glory." O yes. Hence, you hear Mary singing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is His name." Look how the dear woman sang, you know her humble position in life, and she tells you how she felt in her soul.

Again. He shall save the afflicted person. Now, on the day of atonement, what the children of Israel were to do was, the sins of all the people were to be laid on the head of the scapegoat, which was to be taken by a fit man to the wilderness, never to be seen again; on that day they were to afflict their souls before God. Has God the Holy Ghost, made sin a bitter thing to thee? Is there anything afflicts thee, like sin? I have known what it is as a father, a husband, a tradesman, to have trials, troubles, and perplexities like any of you, but I can say, put all of them together, nothing has afflicted my conscience, or made me so miserable and unhappy, as sin.

"O, thou hideous monster, sin,
What a curse hast thou brought in."

It has brought more tears from my eyes than all the other troubles I have had; it has fetched me on my knees, and made me cry to the God of heaven. I know I have been afflicted on account of my sin, I am, more or less, every day of my life; how I long at times to get to heaven; what for?

"There I shall see His face,
And never, never sin,
But from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in."

This is my trouble; sin, *sin*; what a plague and bitterness thou art to me; at times it makes me strike my breast, "God be merciful unto me; cleanse the very thoughts of my heart, renew a right spirit within me." Often before I get up my thoughts arise to God, "Do not let me sin this day in thought, word, nor deed, good God." "The afflicted people Thou wilt save;" these are the ones. I believe the time will come when God will wipe all sorrows from these eyes of mine and thine; nothing unclean shall enter heaven.

"Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame,
None shall obtain admittance there
But followers of the Lamb."

No wicked devil to suggest, no unbelieving, wretched heart to stir up its abominations within, no wandering eyes, no base desires, no covetous feelings, no vain thoughts nor proud workings in the heart, but there we shall be for ever holy, *holy, holy*, and be with those that are holy, too. If this is not what you want to go to heaven for, you are not likely to get there, you are not the man that is bound for it, other things afflict you more than sin. Hart says, you know—

"A faithful friend of grief partakes;
 But union can be none
 Betwixt a heart like melting wax
 And hearts as hard as stone;
 "Betwixt a head diffusing blood
 And members sound and whole;
 Betwixt an agonizing God
 And an unfeeling soul."

If sin afflicts thee, if it makes thee cry for mercy, sigh and cry on account of the abominations of thine heart, God will wipe away all tears from thine eyes by-and-bye, and thou shalt sorrow no more. "If we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him." These are the folks that He will save.

There are many sorts of folks He will save, but I only hint at two or three for a key. "He shall save the souls of the needy." Just the folks that we should not like to have to do with. If we were going to pick out companions, we should not choose the needy for fear they should be drawing too much upon us, but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. "He shall save the souls of the needy," that is, those folks that have nothing to recommend them to His notice. The Psalmist says, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." From Adam the first all through the blessed Word of God, you will find there was not one of those that were saved that the Bible speaks of, had anything to recommend them to God's favour. You hear them say, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their cry;" you hear the king of Israel say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles." These are the folks. I dare say some before God think, "I should have more hope if I could do anything, if I could get a little better than I am." You look at the bright side of a saint, and say, "If I were like that man, I should have some feeling that God would regard me." Why? "Because I see some good things in him." If he has got any faith, hope, or love, the Holy Ghost wrought it in his soul; he was as destitute as thou art. Hence you hear the great apostle himself say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; I did nothing; for I am not sufficient of myself to think anything as of myself, it is God that worketh in me both to will and to do." When he has got the will, then God must work the power. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to do it." It is said, "Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that he that glorieth shall glory in the Lord; no flesh shall glory in His presence." If you sensibly feel your poverty, you cannot think what you would think: you cannot set your thoughts on God and His Christ, you would serve God, but cannot do that; you try, but all your efforts fail; in vain you strive to rise. "Yes," say you, "I know that truly." Then you are just the man for Jesus Christ, you are one that He will pick up; you will give Him all the honour of your salvation. "He shall save the souls of the needy." Do you think any can be more needy than you? "No, I am sure they cannot, they are all richer than I; I cannot pray or feel as I would." Now, as sure as God liveth, and His Word is true, this is who my text speaks of, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour," to save a poor, needy creature, like you. He was sent into the world for this purpose, He lives in heaven for this purpose, to save the souls of the needy. You may shut yourself out, but the Word does not shut you out; it is what the Word speaks in our favour will stand. I have known at times what it is to say, "I have no faith," but the Word did not say I had none. I have said at times, "I have not a good hope," but the Word did not say it. I have said at times, "I have no real love," but the Word did not say so. It is not what we may say, or the devil may say, but it is what the Word says about us will stand.

God has made me say with David, "Though I have said these things in my haste, this is my infirmity." You may go home saying, "I would believe if I could." It is my desire that you may rejoice in God's goodness, and praise Him. You may say, "The minister tried to make me believe, but still I am unbelieving;" but that will not alter it, sinner, you are still the character that He will save. After all that you may say when you get home that He will not save you, the Word says He will; I will tell you another thing, God will have the last word, He will make you say sooner or later, "He has said, and He has done it."

Therefore, He is a "Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins"—to do everything for them, you see. What God has made His dear Son! what a fit, is it not? If God has brought thee to bemoan thyself with Ephraim, to abhor thyself with Job, and really to weep with Peter, that grace has come from the Blessed Son of God. That is a sorrow not to be repented of, it is repentance unto life, the tears that flow from such eyes are bottled by the Blessed Son of God. "Thou hast put my tears into a bottle, are they not in Thy book?" I remember reading of Luther, that before he was brought to know anything of Jesus Christ savingly he had a greater dislike to the word "repent" than anything, he wished it was out of the Bible; but when the Son of God pardoned his sins, and shone into his soul from these words, "The just shall live by faith," he saw it was by believing and not by working he was saved; then he says, "I knew what it was to be sorry for my sins, and to joy in my sorrow." Some of the sweetest moments I have had in my life have been when bemoaning myself at the feet of the Son of God on account of my sins, and feeling He would save me, and while His mercy has bedewed my soul, O the grief for my sins, the weeping on account of them, yet having a sweet feeling they should never be my ruin. This is the repentance the Son of God gives His people. Dear Hart knew something about it when he said—

"Nor is it such a dismal thing,
 As 'tis by some men named;
 A sinner may repent and sing,
 Rejoice, and be ashamed."

It is love and grief compound the unction; such love to Him, and grief in our souls that we sin against so kind a God. Therefore, He is exalted to give repentance, you cannot get it for gold or silver; it comes so free; sometimes when we least expect it. Repentance is not one act, any more than it is one act of faith, there are continual acts of repentance as well as acts of faith. Sometimes I have dropped on my knees hard and cold, and while confessing with my lips, without any feeling, His repentance has dropped in my heart, and melted me in a minute; what a change it has wrought! how my heart has bled for sin, I have adored the Son of God for His goodness in having mercy on such a wretch, and have entreated Him not to let me sin again. As I just said, if you had it to-day, you may wait six months before you have it again; if you ever had it you will not be sent away with Esau, nor damned with Judas; you have got a repentance that flows from the Son of God, He is exalted to give it, and He has given it to you in the freeness of His grace, to prove to you that you are a son or daughter of the Lord God Almighty, and art made a partaker of His Spirit. Therefore say the words of my text, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."