

Read at Mrs Sears Sept 2ⁿ/83

Sermon the Twenty-second.

WISDOM JUSTIFIED OF HER CHILDREN.

"But wisdom is justified of all her children."—LUKE vii. 35.

I HAVE read of a man who bought precious metals, whose custom it was to meet all the large talk of those who brought articles to him for sale with this one question, "Will it stand the fire?" and suiting the action to the word, he would seize the proffered metal with his pincers, and thrust it into the heat of his glowing furnace, which would soon show the hollowness, or otherwise, of its owner's pretensions. Professors, your religion is the most precious or the most worthless thing you possess. It is all you are worth for eternity. If it prove

"Pure gold, well tried by fire,
Faith that stands fast when devils roar,
And love that lasts for evermore,"

you are eternally, immeasurably rich; but if it prove a base alloy, it will leave you, when you most need it, at death and the judgment, for ever "wretched and miserable, poor, and blind, and naked." Oh! shrink not from having your religion tried in the fire on this side the river without a bridge!—"Is not my word like a fire?" If your religion stands under the searching test of the word, it will stand in "that day that shall burn as an oven." "The words that I speak unto you, they shall judge you in that day." The books that will be open before the "great white throne" are copied into the Bible. If you are written to woe in those secret books, a duplicate of your sentence is found in the written word. If the Book of Life writes you to bliss, the Gospel copy in the Bible holds your name. If the Bible is finally against a man, the God of the Bible is against him. Flavel wrote a book which he called "The Touchstone of Sincerity." The true touchstone of sincerity, of God's own providing, is the Bible. O bring your religion now to the touchstone my text furnishes, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." If it can be

proved that you justify Wisdom, then it is proved you are among Wisdom's children. And if among Wisdom's children, Wisdom's home of bliss will be your eternal dwelling-place. But that we may make our ground as firm as we can, we will notice—

I. *This rich title of Jesus*—"Wisdom."

II. *This description of the people of God*—"Wisdom's children."

III. *This striking characteristic of the saints*—They "justify" Wisdom.

I. I notice, then, *this rich title of Jesus*—"Wisdom." That Jesus wears this glorious title, I need spend but little time in proving. To whom else can the rich language of the early part of the Proverbs belong? It is Jesus who says, "Counsel is mine: I am understanding. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Prov. viii. 14—17). And well indeed does this sublime title fit our most glorious Lord and Master.

1. *He is, in His Divine nature, wisdom itself—wisdom in essence.* To say that He is wisdom, is more than to say He is wise. Solomon was wise, but his was derived and circumscribed wisdom; but Jesus is essential wisdom, wisdom eternal, wisdom unbounded, unchanging, not to be augmented, not to be decreased. Of His wisdom we may sing indeed—

"The highest heavens are short of this,
'Tis deeper than the vast abyss."

2. *In His Divine person, He is the "wisdom of God"*—hence He is called the "Word of God," the full expression of the Father's wisdom. The word logic, put for the science of reasoning, and *logos*, a word, have a striking affinity: It is true, we must never push the figurative language of Scripture about God beyond the bounds of that reverence which is due to infinite subjects; nor must we ever attach carnal thoughts to them; but God has seen fit to denote to us the relation of the Father and Son, by an expression derived from the affinity between our thoughts and our words. The thought begets the word; and, if it were not for the

poverty of human language, our words would exactly equal our thoughts. Now, the essential Word of God is "*equal with God.*" He is the "brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." All that the Father is, the Son is. And this does not destroy the eternity of the Son; for the Son would not be equal with the Father were He not as truly "without beginning of days," as the Father is from all eternity. "The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Ghost is eternal; and yet are there not three Eternals, but one Eternal."

"Bow down sense and reason,
Faith only reign here."

Lord, increase our faith, and crush our rash reason,
that this may be the experience of our hearts—

"Where reason fails, with all her powers,
There faith believes and love adores."

But perhaps it is true—

3. *That the chief reason why this glorious title is given to Jesus, is that in His person, work, grace, and offices, we have the most sublime and full manifestation of the infinite wisdom of God.* Look at the construction of your own fearfully and wonderfully made bodies, and at the mysterious bond that links the immaterial tenant to its material house. And then look, out of yourself, upon the huge universe, with its myriad suns and whirling and circling spheres, all managed with hair's-breadth skill and almighty power; and all upon a scale of the most infinite magnificence and benevolence. And if you only look at these things with the most moderate degree of intelligence, you must entitle creation and providence a huge folio, whose title should be proofs of eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, worthy of its great Author; but all creation shrinks into diminutiveness as an expression of power, wisdom, and love, by the side of Bethlehem, Calvary, and the mercy seat. Well might the apostle exultingly exclaim, "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Oh! yes; God has nowhere so unveiled Himself as in Jesus. He has written out in Jesus, in an infinite gift, His boundless benevolence. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And in that

blessed volume of love and blood, He has written Himself Almighty, in unparalleled lines. It cost Him but a word to make the universe; and it would cost Him but a word of His power to multiply those worlds by the million. But oh! when He made bare His saving arm, He made His greatest effort of omnipotence. And if you would see, as nowhere else can be seen, the infinite wisdom of God, behold it at Bethlehem, where almightiness and feeble babyhood were united. Boundlessness was swaddled in a span. There the Father's equal Son and Mary's real babe met in a personal bond. Go, too, to Calvary's cross, and see the rights of rigid justice fully maintained, and the bowels of melting mercy opened. There "mercy and truth meet together," and "righteousness and peace kiss each other." Read there, in lines of wrath, and agony, and love, and blood, and triumph, the unspeakable wisdom of God, and then sing—

"'Twas wisdom form'd the vast design
To ransom us when lost;
And love's unfathomable mine
Provided all the cost."

Yes, in all that Jesus is, in all that Jesus has, as done, is doing, and will ever do, God writes Himself infinitely wise. O for more of "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" in the knowledge of Christ! Happy for those of us who can in any sweet measure sing—

"Jesus, Thy Godhead, blood, and name,
Oh, 'tis eternal life to know;
Here let my soul her hold maintain,
When press'd by conscience, wrath, or woe."

Jesus is wisdom's substance, wisdom's declaration, wisdom's source, and wisdom's subject. Have any of us a spark of true wisdom? Jesus was its spring: "Out of His mouth cometh wisdom." He is "made of God unto us wisdom."

Ah! sinners; it is no trifling question I ask when I inquire if any of you have a spark of true wisdom. I put it again: Are you made wise to know self and loathe it—to know sin and hate, confess, and forsake it—to know the world and renounce it—to know your own righteousness and to trample it into the mire—to know God and to fear Him—to know Jesus, and to fly to Him, trust, love, and serve Him? Happy you who can

truly say "Yes" to these questions: you have the heaven-born gift of wisdom, for—

"True wisdom's of celestial birth,
Can both instruct and cherish;
Other attainments are of earth,
And all that's earth must perish."

True wisdom seeks its source, Jesus, and finds in its source its subject. Wisdom's subject—its everlasting subject—is Jesus. Paul so saw the sum of all saying, sanctifying, exalting wisdom, lay in the knowledge of Jesus, that he "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." Whatever you may know in divinity, if you know not Jesus, you are a fool as to any saving sanctifying knowledge. And if you have but heart-knowledge of Jesus, however deficient in all other knowledge, you are "the wise that shall inherit glory," when "shame shall be the promotion of fools." But this leads me to notice—

II. *This description of the people of God*—"Wisdom's children." Ordinarily, when God's people are spoken of as "children," it is in reference to their adoption or covenant relation to God the Father. Hence we are said to be "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and are exhorted to tread such a path as shall manifest that we are "the children of our Father which is in heaven." But in this saying of the Lord Jesus, believers are called the children of Wisdom, that is, the children of the Lord Jesus. We are not to suppose by this, as has been sometimes erroneously stated, that the three titles given to the persons in the Trinity are only three names given to one Person; for God is not one in person, but is one in essence. The truth is, that believers are the children of the Lord Jesus in a different sense in which they are the children of the Father; they are the children of the Father by adoption—it is to the first Person in the Trinity that, in the "spirit of adoption," they cry, "Abba, Father;" but they are not the children of the Lord Jesus by adoption, but by a federal connexion. Just as all the human family are the legal children of the first Adam, so are all the members of the Church the legal children of the second Adam; and it is in reference to this covenant headship of the Church that the Saviour wears the title of "the everlasting Father." It is from our adoption interest in

the Father's love that we get our title to the inheritance of saints: "If sons, then heirs." And it is from our union with Jesus we get our legal fitness to receive that inheritance; just as, through the fall of our first legal head, we come into a state of condemnation, and have a just title to hell, as "children," or heirs, "of wrath," so, through the obedience of our second legal Head, Jesus, we are brought into a state of justification, and have a just title to live. Oh! the mercy of having a legal connexion with Jesus, the everlasting Father, so that while, through our first father's "disobedience we were made sinners," by our second Father's "obedience we are made righteous." What can prove us in this blessed position? What but the being convinced of our guilt and condemnation, and being led to quit every claim to exemption from wrath upon the ground of our own works, or the absolute mercy of God, and the being led by the Spirit of God to fly believingly to the finished work of Jesus, and "take," in the hand of a relying faith, the "garment of Him that was Surety for a stranger;" and thus, "not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Oh! deceive not your own souls. It is as necessary that you should have faith given you to put on the righteousness of Jesus, as it was necessary that He should work it, and that the Father should impute it. I believe it is a most delusive use to make of evidences, to make them a substitute for "receiving Christ," which is the same thing as "believing on His name," which is essential to salvation: "He that believeth not shall be damned." No other way of salvation could Paul propound to the jailor excepting that of faith in Christ: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Evidences that you are in the way to Christ may, and should, encourage you, but should never be rested in. The invitations and promises to, and descriptions of, seeking souls in the Word, are cordials to revive and invigorate those who are "asking their way to Zion, with their faces thitherward;" but, seeking soul, it is essential to your salvation that you "lay hold on the hope set before you." And evidences, too, are a great confirmation that we *have* believed in Jesus. To find that the Spirit of God is producing those

fruits in our souls that could only spring from a living faith in Jesus, how encouraging and assuring to our hearts!

Besides, by our relation of children to Wisdom, as the second Adam, we get not only a *new legal state*—a state of justification—but also a *new spiritual nature*, or sanctification; just as we are not only involved in the guilt of the first Adam's disobedience, but inherit from him a false and foul nature, so the people of God not only derive from Christ a justifying righteousness, but also a holy spiritual nature. Not one of Adam's race but is born with a corrupt nature: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me;" and not one of Wisdom's children but is new-born with a holy nature. Holiness within us is as necessary for its ends as righteousness on us is necessary for its purposes: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Righteousness is by *imputation*, but holiness is by *implantation*. As we have Adam's sin *reckoned to us*, but Adam's corrupt nature *imparted to us*, so must we, too, if we are Wisdom's children, have Christ's righteousness imputed to us, and His holiness implanted in us. Some have erroneously spoken of "imputed sanctification;" no such doctrine is taught in the Word. God, in reckoning Christ's righteousness to us, imputes to us what we have not in ourselves: "In the Lord have I righteousness." But the Holy Spirit in sanctification takes the life, the grace, that is in the fulness of Jesus, and communicates it to our souls. God does not reckon life to us while we do not possess it, as He does with Christ's righteousness; but really "quickens" us; puts Divine life, a "new heart, a right spirit within us." Now, if you are the manifest children of Wisdom, you have this new principle in your souls. All the tender actings of godly fear in a quickened conscience; all the mourning and lamenting of a living soul over his sinfulness; all the battlings of the godly with "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" all the outgoings of a longing heart after Jesus; all the hungry wishes of the living soul after the feast of fat things that God has prepared in Zion; all the venturing, clinging, and rejoicing acts of faith; all the warm, melting movements of Divine love; all the thirsty anticipations of a good hope through grace, with

all the fruits of separation, devotedness, and service, found in a believer; all these things spring from that new nature that Wisdom imparts by His Spirit to His new-born children. Let no man deceive you, by the false doctrine of imputed sanctification, into the notion that you are not to look for any holiness in yourselves. You are to look for no righteousness in yourselves to meet the claim of God's law; for purity, in which to be accepted, you must "not have on your own righteousness," or even your sanctification, but only that righteousness "which is of God by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe;" but to prove you are the new-born children of Wisdom, you must have a new nature.

When the Holy Spirit witnesses to our justification, He shines upon the blessed fact that in all our unrighteousness and ungodliness, we have "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us," "the precious blood and righteousness of Jesus." Or, in other words, He assures us that we are believers on "Him that justifieth the ungodly," therefore are "not condemned:" for "by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." But when the blessed Spirit witnesses to our gracious as well as legal connexion with Christ, He shines upon His own blessed work in our souls: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit." "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world," &c. It is thus we "prove our own work, and have rejoicing in ourselves, and not in another," and that "a good man shall be satisfied from himself." O happy people, whose legal connexion with Wisdom is proved by their fleeing to Him for refuge by faith, and whose gracious connexion with Wisdom is proved by their bearing fruit in their hearts, lips, and lives.

It is distinct enough, to our daily sorrow, that we carry about with us the vile proofs that we are corrupt children of our corrupt father Adam. Oh that we bore as indisputable daily proofs that we are gracious

children of our gracious Father, Wisdom. But I must hasten on to show—

III. *This striking characteristic of the saints—they justify Wisdom.* You know that justify is a law term; so that it appears that Wisdom is put upon a trial amongst men. Indeed, such has been the case for many a century. The Lord Jesus has stood His trial in man's presumptuous court for many an age, and all but Wisdom's children have directly or indirectly condemned Him. The worldling condemns His path of separation from the world, and all the unearthliness of His aims and His precepts. The "broad-church" men condemn Him as ignorant and unscientific, as cheating the people by representing Moses as a true prophet, whom they have, as they pretend, discovered to be a deceiver; and by performing acts quite natural, that he palmed upon the people as miracles. The "ritualist" condemns Him for the simple and unceremonious style of worship that He introduced, and busies himself in pilfering from paganism and Judaism all sorts of gaudy, flesh-pleasing forms, to excite the natural passions of the human heart. The Socinian condemns His claim to essential Divinity. The Arminians, and all kinds of Pharisees, condemn His discriminating doctrines of Divine sovereignty; not approving of His "not praying for the world, but for them which God had given Him," and declaring that "no man can come unto Him except the Father draw him." The Antinomian condemns His bidding His servants to invite "as many as they find" to the marriage; His giving out such holy precepts, and leaving such a holy example to guide the steps of His people. Thus all classes of graceless people find Jesus "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." They all join the cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas;" "Away with Him, away with Him." They are all offended in Jesus.

"But Wisdom is justified of all her children." Bring a child of Wisdom into court, let him give out of his graciously-exercised heart, his views of Wisdom; let us ask him, "What think you of Jesus' claim to being a Divine Person? Can you justify Him in this?" His heart exclaims, "Yes, indeed I can, with all my soul.

* Some take Him a creature to be—
A man, or an angel, at most;

Sure, these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost!
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in His blood,
Nor on His protection rely,
Unless I were sure He is God."

Ask him again, "What think you of the doctrine that Jesus teaches as a Prophet? Do you believe that God or the sinner is first in election and conversion?" He exclaims, "I owe all I have, and am, and hope, to mere grace—

'There was nothing in me to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight;
'Tis even so, Father, I ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in Thy sight.'

Ask him further, "If he can justify Jesus as a Priest, who has by the sacrifice of Himself, finished transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness?" His whole soul will exclaim, "But for this blessed office of Jesus, I were for ever lost—

'My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.'

Ask him also, if he can condemn the Kingship of Jesus, and the holy yoke of service He imposes upon His followers? His heart will exclaim, "I condemn myself that I no more faithfully serve this blessed King: I know His yoke is easy, and His burden is light; and I long to have it fully on my neck. My heart cries out to this glorious King of saints, 'Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments.'

"King and Guardian of Thy nation,
I would now Thy sceptre own,
Trusting Thy complete salvation,
I would serve Thee, Lord, alone.
Other lords have ruled o'er me,
Now I sink beneath Thy throne—
Set Thyself as King before me,
I would serve Thee, Lord, alone."

Indeed, in all the Person, work, fulness, offices, names, and characters of Jesus, all Wisdom's children justify Him.

Oh, do you justify Wisdom? and is yours a heart-and-life justification of Wisdom? Do you justify that infallible Prophet by sitting at His feet, and learning of Him? Do you justify that all-atoning Priest by venturing the whole weight of your immortal interests upon His finished atonement? and do you justify that blessed and holy King by rejecting all other lords, and submitting your soul to the rule of His holy precepts? Oh, be assured of this one thing, that sin, self-righteousness, and an unholy profession of high doctrines and experience, are beaten tracks in the broad road to hell. The only way to heaven is, Jesus to teach, Jesus to save, Jesus to govern; and the only power that can guide your feet in that way is the blessed Spirit. Oh, blessed children of Wisdom, who are not offended in Jesus, but deeply offended with sin, self, Satan; the world, and your own righteousness; the day is soon coming when Wisdom, whose *legal* children you are by eternal union and living faith, and whose *gracious* children you are by a spiritual and dependent union, will own you for His glorified children, and say to His Eternal Father, "Behold I, and the children which Thou hast given me." And then, O then, you will no longer see "through a glass darkly," but "face to face." Then the unhindered rays of divine glory that shine in the face of Jesus will occupy your admiring gaze for ever, and will fill your heart to overflowing with loving and eternal proof that Christ is "the wisdom of God." O then, in His divine person, in His holy human nature, in His spotless robe of righteousness, His precious sin-atoning blood, in His fulness of all spiritual blessings, in His wondrous management of all things for the benefit of His Church, in His rule of righteousness, and even in the judgment that He executes, you will see everlasting cause to exclaim, "This dear Immanuel, this precious worthy Lamb, is indeed the Christ, 'the wisdom of God and the power of God.'" And oh that, while waiting for the beatific sight of His unveiled face, we might often by precious faith see the glory of God beaming in the face of Jesus Christ, and, experiencing its transforming effects, go forth among men so imbued with His Spirit that they might take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. Amen, Amen. Let it be so, says every child, every justifier of Wisdom.

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REPRODUCED FROM THE ORIGINAL

Heard ye not from yon bright portals,
 Bursting forth in heavenly lays,
 Shouts of love from sav'd immortals,
 Peals of joy and songs of praise,
 Crying, "Crown Him,
 Monarch to eternal days"?

Up, bright seraphs, up, and crown Him;
 Crown Him for preserving grace;
 Sing His power while ye surround Him,
 Him who kept you in your place:
 Crown Him, crown Him,
 Him who kept you in your place.

But the thought, stand still and wonder,
 Saints can sing in notes more loud,
 Louder than the loudest thunder
 Bursting from th' angelic crowd;
 They can crown Him,
 Crown Him for redeeming blood.

Now, while passing through this desert
 To the world of endless joy,
 Fain we'd in a theme so pleasant
 All our hearts and tongues employ;
 We would crown Him
 While we live and when we die.

Then may our unfetter'd spirits
 Cut the air and wing their way,
 Wash'd and rob'd in Jesus' merits,
 To the realms of brightest day;
 Where we'll crown Him,
 Crown Him in one ceaseless lay.

Crown Him, crown Him, ever crown Him,
 Crown Him to eternal days;
 Shout aloud, while we surround Him,
 "Worthy Thou to have the praise!"
 Crown Him, crown Him,
 Crown the Lamb in endless lays.

— From "Clifton Hymns," Post-free from Miss Kent, Shefford, Beds, 1s.

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