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What is Implied in “Preaching Christ”?

AN ADDRESS

To the Members and Friends of the Open-Air Mission,

BY

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What is Implied in “Preaching Christ”?

IT is a household word among us, that we are to “preach Christ.” No expression is more frequently used in the present day; none more unanimously adopted by professing Christians. It may be regarded as a favourable and hopeful symptom. Christian preaching is described in Scripture in various ways. We are sent to “preach the Gospel”; we are “stewards of the Divine mysteries”; we are not to “shun to declare the whole counsel of God”; we are to be “witnesses” of the Truth, as it is in Jesus. But important and precious as are these designations of preaching, we feel, that the fullest and most comprehensive expression, as well as the shortest and most profound is—to “preach Christ.” For Christ Himself is the Gospel, the glad tidings of salvation. He Himself is the Word of God, the Message of the Most High to sinful and sorrowful mankind; He is the Truth; in Him Eternal Light, Love, and Life are manifested and given to the children of men.

(1.) In considering this expression, the first thing that strikes us, is that we preach a PERSON. Theories, ideas, precepts, motives, examples, have power and attraction; but the human soul longs after a Person, whom to reverence, trust, and love: it longs after a loving One, to rescue and befriend us, to give us peace and strength. The eye of man thirsts not merely after Light, but after another eye, into which it may look and live. The Psalmist has expressed the true need of man, whether he is conscious of it or not—“my soul thirsteth for . . . the living God.” This is the peculiar, the unique excellence of Scripture, of which Christ is the centre, that it brings before our view the Person who is able to satisfy all our longings, to deliver us from

all our misery, and be to us the fountain of living water, in time and in eternity. Who can read the Old and New Testament Scriptures, without seeing on every page, that it is the revelation, the "word," of a Person, full of life and love! There are many narratives, many biographies, many commandments, many institutions, many predictions: the whole world finds its reflection and explanation in its pages; but in everything, and above everything, we have the voice—we behold the countenance—of a Person. "I am the Lord." "Look unto Me!" "Return unto the Lord thy God." "I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward." In all the Old Testament History, Teaching, Law, Institutions and Prophecies, we behold GOD; not Deity, an abstraction, a Divine power—but the Living God; not God, hidden in darkness impenetrable—but God, as in condescending love He seeks and saves man, making known His name and showing His face. And in the New Testament we find—that the same supreme, central, and all-pervading position which is given to JEHOVAH in the Old, is assigned to a Person, whose name is Jesus. All the gospels unfold this name; Jehovah "shall save His people from their sins": in all the narratives and discourses we hear the voice full of majesty and sweetness, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden." Him we behold in the Acts of the Apostles; Him we behold in His Divine Fulness in all the epistles. And at the end of the Apocalypse—after so many chapters, in which His Divine glory and Kingship are unfolded—the Blessed Saviour calls Himself in the most touching manner, "I, Jesus," summing up the whole New Testament testimony; "Behold Me." "Be of good cheer; it is I."

(2.) If we preach a PERSON, and as need scarcely be added a *Divine* Person (for it is inconceivable that the message of God to man should be a creature, ever so exalted and perfect), then it follows, that we cannot truly understand Christ, His Person, His Work, His Purpose, except by Divine revelation. The Christ of human reason, intuition, and aspiration—the Christ of History, explained and unfolded merely by human analysis—is not the Christ of God. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." No man can understand

Christ—even after Christ has lived and died; and with the help of the New Testament Scriptures—unless He is revealed to him by the Spirit.

Here lies the source of all pseudo-Christianity. A Divine Person is understood only by Divine revelation, of which Scripture is the record without, and the Holy Ghost the illumination within. To preach Christ means to preach Christ *according to the Scriptures*—according to the whole Divinely inspired record—the oracles of God: for the very facts of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection; and His own words, when viewed only in the light of reason and of history, and explained by human thoughts, feelings and moral intuitions—are not the true facts and words. For this reason Christ Himself, after His resurrection, sums up His teaching and the commission with which He entrusted His Apostles, in the memorable words in which He connects in an inseparable bond three things: the written revelation; the facts as they happened in fulfilment of the Scripture; and the preaching which is to go forth among all nations. Hence the Apostle Paul as among the Jews, so also among the Corinthian idolaters, preached not only that Christ died and was buried, and that Christ rose again—but that Christ died and rose again *according to the Scriptures*. For the true Jesus Christ, who will come again from Heaven, came the first time out of Bethlehem. God sent Him not to Athens, not to Rome, but to the chosen People; into a soil separated and prepared by a Divine History for Him. He is the Son of David, and of the seed of Abraham; He was born of a woman, and made under the Law—a man, and an Israelite. And only Scripture can unfold to us His Person, His Work, His first and His second Advents; and the Spirit-breathed Scripture only when the self-same Spirit enlightens our mind.

(3.) But if this be true: that Christ is the Son of God; and that Christ must be preached according to the Scriptures, and as the Holy Ghost reveals Him to the soul—it follows, that to preach Christ means to preach Christ *crucified*; that the death of Christ on the Cross as an atoning sacrifice, is the very centre and heart of PREACHING CHRIST.

It is necessary to dwell on this point, as it is so often impugned, obscured, and evaded, in the present day. The instinct of the world, as well as the profound and vivid conviction of the Church, have agreed for the last eighteen centuries on this one point, that the centre of Christianity is Christ crucified. The world—with doubt, unbelief, aversion; the Church—in faith, love, adoring joy and triumph. When we say a man believes in Christ, we mean—he trusts in Christ, who died the Just for the unjust: when we say a man preaches Christ, we mean—he declares the redemption, the forgiveness of sins through faith in His blood: when Christians take the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him, it is in remembrance of Him who laid down His life as a ransom for the sins of many. The Cross of Christ is the summary of all; the central point, from which radiate Justification, Sanctification, and the Future Glory.

It has been said that the message of the Church is—the resurrection of Christ; to declare that Jesus is living. Blessed be God, that Christ is risen and at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But it is a great error to suppose that Christ's resurrection and life form the Gospel message to the world. We can have no doubt what the Gospel is, which God sends His messengers to preach. For the Apostle Paul writes most clearly: that God "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," and "hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech by us, we pray in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." And that by this reconciliation on God's part nothing else is meant but the expiatory substitution-death of Christ on the Cross is most evident by the verse immediately following: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

This is THE GOSPEL. This must be preached to the world. To the world our message is—Christ crucified: to the believer, the Church, our message is—Christ is risen; He lives; He is your Righteousness and Strength, your Life and Hope. It is in analogy with this, that the death of Christ, the crucifixion, took place before

the whole world, Jewish and heathen; all the people beheld Him; Christ was lifted up. The resurrection of Christ took place in secret; no human eye witnessed the mysterious and glorious moment; and the risen Saviour appeared only to the chosen ones, and not to the world. It is perfectly true that if Christ is not risen the Gospel would neither be true nor a living and vitalizing power; but *the Gospel itself* is—CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY.

But besides, and this is of equal significance, What is meant by the resurrection of Christ? and Why is it of such cardinal and blessed importance? Not that Jesus as man was raised from the dead, nor that Jesus as all godly men, lives now and lives for ever: but that Jesus, the *Christ, our substitute*, was raised; that He who was offered up for *our offences*, rose again because of our justification; that the 53rd chapter of Isaiah was fulfilled in Him—He was despised and rejected by Israel; He was honoured and exalted by the Father: and why? Because He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. He lives and sees His seed; because His soul was made an offering for sin: He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death. This is the significance of the Resurrection; and thus all the Apostles preached: and Jesus Himself said unto the beloved disciple: Fear not, I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth *and was dead*: and, behold, I am alive for evermore.

As the atoning death of Christ not merely explains the true meaning of the Resurrection and the foundation on which His exaltation rests (Phil. ii.)—so the glory of the risen Lord, as Prophet and royal Priest, can only be seen in the light of Golgotha. Because He died, God exalted Him to be a Prince and a *Saviour*, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* “By His own blood He entered into the holy place, the true sanctuary, having obtained eternal redemption for us”: thus the epistle to the Hebrews teaches us. He is the Mediator of the New Testament and the High Priest over the house of God,

* Not to prove to sceptics the supernatural and the life to come.

because He was once offered to bear the sins of many. And only by faith in His blood can we enter into the Holiest, and thus be partakers of the spiritual and eternal blessings of His Priesthood. Nor do the glorified saints around the Throne throughout eternity ever lose sight of the central and most blessed manifestation and act of Divine Love. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood"—this is the foundation on which rests the glory which the royal Priest gives unto His saints—"and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

Preaching Christ crucified is, lastly, the only way in which *Christ's life and ministry* can be truly understood. We are often accused of not bringing out with sufficient emphasis the example of Christ and the perfection of His character and life. We are told that to preach the sinlessness and purity, the love and self-denial, of Christ is the most important thing. But is this true? Men say: Unfold to us the beauty, the grandeur, the love of Christ the perfect man, that we may imitate every feature of His noble character. This would be practical preaching. Just as the Jews at the foot of Mount Sinai promised that they would observe whatever God would command them, not knowing the true nature of sin and the real condition of sinful and fallen man, so do our nineteenth century Europeans imagine that all they need is to have a high and attractive ideal of humanity set before them. This is one aspect of the fallacy. But another aspect is—that men fail to see what the example of Christ really is. What is the glory of Christ's earthly life?—wherein consists its incomparable character whereby it was to the Father an infinite delight, and is to the believer the great model and sustaining strength? As the Apostle explains in the epistle to Philippians, the mind which was in Christ Jesus, *which is also to be in us*, is—that for the glory of the Father and the salvation of sinners He became man, and having become man went in the path of humility; always looking forward to, and at last enduring, the death of the Cross. This was *the* will of God, which He came to do. This was *the* obedience. In this light alone we truly behold the Lamb without spot and blemish; the love and obedi-

ence which He manifested during all the days of His flesh. Thus we are to preach Christ crucified: not to the exclusion, but to the inclusion and true possession, of all that is in Christ.

(4.) For we preach not the crucifixion of Christ, but **CHRIST HIMSELF**. Christ yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King; Christ in His humiliation, and Christ in His glory. Christ the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world; promised unto our first parents in the garden of Eden; witnessed by the Law, both negatively by convincing us of our guilt and need of a Saviour, and positively by the prefiguring Levitical ordinances and sacrifices: Christ, announced and described with growing clearness and with ardent longing by the Prophets: Christ welcomed by the godly in Israel, who waited for the consolation: Christ who in the fulness of time was sent; who of His own blessed accord and grace came to minister unto others and lay down His life as a ransom: Christ, who glorified God by His obedience, and finally on the cross accomplished everlasting redemption: Christ, who because He had been obedient unto death was exalted; who is the Resurrection and the Life; and who is now the Saviour of sinners, the strength and hope of His saints, the Lord of glory; who will come again to fulfil the whole counsel of God and establish the Kingdom. Him we desire to preach, a Person, true man and yet true God, in whom we possess the Father and from whom we receive the Spirit; a Person so glorious that only the Scriptures can present Him to our mind—and only the Spirit, by whom the Scriptures were given, can enable us to behold and to trust Him; Christ crucified: for the love of God—which *God Himself* commends and exalts, both in its eternal source and in its everlasting results—centres in the cross; and Christ crucified is the true Christ, past, present, and future, in all the aspects of His Mediatorial dignity.

Truly His name is **WONDERFUL**. We can only adore and love. Supreme love belongs only to Him, to whom adoration is due. Adoration can only be given to Him whom the heart loveth. Blessed be Jesus

Christ, God and Man, who loved us; who died for us; who lives for us now; who will come to receive us unto Himself and give us glory. He is the true Mediator between God and man. The Father says from above, "Hear Him!" The Spirit on earth glorifies Christ. There is no other name given in which we can be saved. There is none like unto Him. We preach Christ, because *God* speaks to us in His Son.

In preaching Christ we ought always to bear in mind three things. First, that Christ is *absolutely necessary*. "I am the Way." "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

Secondly, Christ is *absolutely sufficient*. We are "complete in Him, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily." God hath made Him unto us "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

And thirdly, Christ is *absolutely accessible*. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." "I am the door: by Me if any man enter." "Ho, every one that thirsteth!"

We must ourselves be deeply and firmly convinced of these three points—else our preaching will lack earnestness, power, and persuasiveness. We must endeavour to produce with God's help this threefold conviction in our hearers. First, man's absolute need of Christ. He is essential. We cannot be saved without Him. We cannot draw near to God without Him.

"I need Thee, precious Jesus."

Secondly, Christ is all we need, Christ is abundantly and overflowingly sufficient.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find."

And thirdly, we who are lost apart from Christ, we who should be so abundantly blessed if we had Christ, we are to look upon Christ as absolutely accessible to each of us—"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

I.

CHRIST IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. It seems to me that in the present day our greatest difficulty is in impressing on our hearers the urgent and absolute necessity of a Saviour. It is difficult to represent the actual

condition of the sinner before God with the necessary solemnity and urgency, and at the same time with persuasive wisdom and loving tenderness. My impression is—that *modern preaching lacks power mainly in this fundamental point*. The peculiar tendencies of thought and feeling of the age render the difficulty still greater. Men see the beauty and the benefit of religion; men see the power of Christ to elevate and ennoble; men will admit, that of all religions Christianity is the best; men will even acknowledge the unique character and influence of Christ—but *their* attitude of respect, of veneration, of receptiveness, is very different from the attitude of the sinner, who asks: "What must I do to be saved?" Likewise there is a lack in our preaching, in its tone—unless we are convinced that our message is one of the utmost, nay of all-absorbing urgency. Our whole preaching in that case lacks *tension*.

The grandeur of the Remedy cannot be seen, unless we know something of the depth of the Fall. The third chapter of Genesis is a fundamental chapter: as in Scripture, so in experience. The old-fashioned saying: Ruin by the Fall; Redemption by the Blood of Christ; and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost—is true, profound, and most important. Calvin used to remark, that there are three great chapters in Scripture, each a third chapter; the third chapter of Genesis—showing us man's Fall and sinful condition; the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, revealing propitiation by the atonement of Christ; and the third chapter of the Gospel of John, teaching us regeneration by the Holy Ghost. Unless we know what guilt is, we do not feel the need of atonement: unless we know the utter finfulness and helplessness of man, we do not feel the need of the Spirit, to enlighten and persuade our hearts to accept Christ. The Gospel is heard; but there is no heart-acceptance, because the heart is unbroken.

The need of Jesus. Some people are fond of remarking, that they like to hear "the still small voice." But are they themselves still and lowly, so as to listen to the gentle and peaceful Gospel? Why did the fire and earthquake precede the still small voice? Was it not the same God of love who sent

them? Not that the Lord delights in the fire and earthquake, or has any pleasure in wounding and killing. But His pleasure is to heal and bind up the broken-hearted, and to make alive those who have been killed. It was indeed the still small voice when the Apostle Paul said to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Here was nothing but grace, gift, love: but was there not first the earthquake, the foundations of the prison being shaken, and the inmost depths of the soul moved, so that trembling the jailer called, "What must I do to be saved?"

Man is so blind, that God Himself must teach him even his need of Christ. God Himself must rouse us; and by His Spirit reveal to us the depths in which we are, and out of which we cry unto Him. It is true, that even apart from Scripture and the special influence of converting grace, we possess a consciousness of sin: with its double effect—of shame in the presence of God; and a dread of the Judgment of God and the mysterious Eternity, in which we feel that all that is real and hidden, *and only that*, will be made manifest. Let men say what they like, and that in very grand and apparently lofty phraseology, we all feel, that there is nothing we can take with us into the unseen world, but the sense of guilt: as Shakespeare has expressed it in that monologue,* which has appealed to mankind more than any of his words.

Nor do I wish to forget, or to undervalue, higher and nobler feelings than fear or dread which are connected with man's need of a Saviour. Rather should we emphasize them as God Himself does in His word and our Saviour in His teaching. For when man fell, he still remained MAN; that is, a being—body, soul, and spirit—created in the image of God and for God. He left the fountain of living water; but still he cannot be satisfied without *water*. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." It is this experience of the utterly unsatisfactory character of everything this world can give us, or that we can be to ourselves; this feeling of loneliness, restlessness—which confirms, and by God's grace prepares, the feeling of need

* "To be or not to be—that is the question": &c.

of Christ. There are connected with this all the Divinely-appointed thorns and briars, sicknesses and sorrows, partings and wrenches, which sin has made necessary, and which Divine wisdom and love have made subservient to the purposes of prevenient grace. Even more closely may we view the connection of man's natural condition and the first beginnings of the special gospel call. As Jesus loved the young man when His all-seeing and merciful eyes beheld in that ardent countenance something better than his words of self-satisfaction, so we may regard man's desire to do some good thing—to attain to some great moral excellence—as a witness for God. Yet all this is only the outer court. The true need of a Saviour is God's gift.

Christians must feel the great importance of the Old Testament in revealing to us our sin, guilt, and helplessness; because it reveals to us the attributes of God with wonderful solemnity, fulness, and impressiveness. Christ came in the fulness of time; and the preparation by which God trained Israel during so many centuries is in substance, though in a different form, necessary for all men. By the law comes the knowledge of sin; and without the knowledge of sin we do not feel the need of Christ. To the neglect of the Old Testament I attribute the present prevalence of superficial views and feelings concerning sin. The Old Testament unfolds to us the character of God and the character of man. It lays emphasis on the great difficulty of the problem of man's salvation. God is holy; man is sinful: God is just; man is guilty. God is the living God into whose presence nothing dead or connected with death can enter: and *yet* there is grace bringing men near to God; there is forgiveness, abundant and joyous; there is life and communion. The Old Testament contains also the solution; but darkly, in scattered fragments, in symbols and promises which need to be combined.

Well might Bernard of Clairvaux say: "Whenever I compare the intense desire of the Old Testament saints for the advent of the Messiah, I feel ashamed that my gratitude and joy in the fulfilment of the promises are so faint and lukewarm." For the New Testament lays all emphasis on the solution. It takes

for granted that we know the profound, complicated, difficulty of the problem. It delights in giving the solution in the clearest, briefest, and simplest words. Oh, how much more may the simplest children and men know than prophets and kings!—from the very name JESUS; from the oft-repeated "Christ died for the ungodly;" from such condensed expressions: "the Lamb in the midst of the Throne." But how much less than the prophets and kings, and than the least of the Old Testament saints, do those readers of the New Testament know and possess, who do not understand and believe that God is holy and just; that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; that we have destroyed ourselves; that we lie helpless, and that only sovereign grace can rescue us.

The Old Testament may be compared to a riddle. The perfection of a riddle is that it is difficult to solve, because it contains many elements which have to be combined; and the more contradictory and exclusive of one another they appear the more skilful is the riddle, especially if thereby the highest unity, harmony, and many-sidedness are described.

The New Testament contains the solution, perfect, simple, glorious. But what is it to him who has never felt the *tension* of the riddle? He says, The debt is paid, Jesus is a Saviour; or even, Christ died for sinners: but there is no light or power in his words.

The Old Testament reveals to us GOD: not merely God's justice, severity, holiness; but God's whole character, as man is to view and understand it. Throughout the whole Old Testament God reveals His name: His goodness, mercy, tenderness, longsuffering, compassion, as well as His wisdom, truth, justice, and His omnipotence, sovereignty, and eternal glory. God, in the Old Testament as in the New, seeks the lost sinner. He reveals Himself both to inspire fear; and then the longing to return. The very first question, "Adam, where art thou?" is the same voice which said afterwards: "I am come to call sinners to repentance." The law, given on Mount Sinai, is called a FIERY LAW, and so it is; but it begins with the revelation of the Redeemer-God, of the whole God: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of Egypt

out of the house of bondage": and this expression, *the Lord thy God*; this gospel of grace, grace sovereign, redeeming, and everlasting; occurs in each of the first five commandments, which refer to our relation to the Law-giver.

And yet the merciful Covenant-God in this law unveils man's guilt and defilement: it judges him with a perfect and inexorable judgment; condemns him; pronounces the curse—oh, with what solemnity and awful majesty: and yet He is the Lord our God! The law reveals the depth of sin in the heart; the length and breadth of sin in all the manifestations of life; the height of sin in its opposition to God.*

The whole object of the law is to teach us the depth of the Fall. Without the third chapter of Genesis the law is unintelligible: and the law is the commentary on that solemn narrative. The law reveals God in His Holiness—He *is* love: but He has wrath against sin; it reveals man's guilt and the need of atonement; it reveals man's sinfulness and the need of renewal. The stern aspect of the law is the necessary preparation or our understanding the redeeming love of God.

When man sinned, man departed from God: and as man departed from God, God departed from man. The wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness must now reveal itself from heaven. By his disobedience man went outside the circle of Divine love; he must experience now the wrath of God. This expression is most obnoxious to the present age: it would look upon it as a blemish of the Old Testament, as an unworthy conception of God. Partly because we forget that God's wrath is not like our wrath. Man's wrath is carnal, impure, violent, unrestrained, separate from reason, equity, calmness; it possesses us, and is not under our control; God's wrath is holy, and in harmony with all His attributes, in wisdom, justice, patience, longsuffering; it proceeds out of His

* "In the law God has concluded all under sin. He sees sin everywhere, and requires cleansing and satisfaction throughout. Man from his birth to his death, his words and works, his prayers and offerings, his house, his food, his garments, his field with its harvest, his vine and his olive tree, his earthen, wooden, and brazen vessels—all stood under law, under sin, needing atonement and purification."

holy, spiritual, and ever-blessed Being. The connection between sin and misery, between sin and death, is not arbitrary, not merely a natural sequence of seed and fruit, but is based on the wrath of God, who can have no fellowship with darkness, or look upon iniquity. Thus when man forsook God, the wrath of God was made manifest in all the consequences of sin, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. True, God is love; but that very love must hate sin. He is a consuming fire. And thus it was, that Christ died not the death of a martyr: but He felt death in its penal connection with sin; He had to empty the cup of wrath when He was made a curse for us. This is the teaching of all Scripture. So Moses, in the 90th Psalm, says: "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled." So we read in the gospel of John: "He that believeth not on the Son . . . the wrath of God abideth on him." The Baptist preached: "Flee from the wrath to come!" The Apostle reminded believers that they were waiting for the Son of God, even Jesus, "who delivered us from the wrath to come."

But while God revealed in the law His holy and just character, and the true nature and consequence of sin—thus teaching man the need of expiation, redemption, and renewal—He appealed to Israel in the most loving, tender, merciful manner; declaring that He will abundantly pardon; that with Him is plenteous redemption; that He will bring to man His righteousness and His salvation. The voice of Jehovah is, so to speak, human; even as the voice of Jesus is Divine.

Exactly the same combination of severity and love we find in the New Testament, only more bright, more intense. The severity, the awfulness—is greater. It is from the lips of Jesus and in the writings of the Apostles that we are taught the judgment of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord: the most fearful as well as explicit declarations of the everlasting consequence of sin are to be found not in the Old but in the New Testament. The full light of life brings out the darkness of death. All is now clearly revealed: the love of God; the nature of sin; the kingdom and power of Satan. Only the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus manifested sin. The

most appalling declaration that sin is enmity against God—is the counterpart of that most astounding manifestation of the cross, that God is love. The necessity of redemption and renewal is thus revealed in the New Testament with still greater power and intensity. We need Christ because we need God—to know God; to be reconciled to God; to be brought into loving fellowship with God; and finally to enter into the blessedness prepared by God for His children. And Christ, and Christ only, can give us what we need.

II.

CHRIST IS ABSOLUTELY SUFFICIENT.—This absolute perfection of Christ—this abundant and overflowing grace—forms the theme of all apostolic teaching; and we feel as if human language seems to the Apostles inadequate to express their conviction and their joy. Even in the Old Testament we can see the riches of the grace of God. I have already referred to the expressions “plenteous redemption,” “abundant pardon.” So we read that God will give to the thirsty not merely water, but wine and milk: “delight yourself in fatness.” God’s forgiveness is the manifestation of His eternal love; His great delight, joy, and glory—are in our salvation. He will not merely save—but also glorify Israel, and rejoice over them. He magnifies the coming Christ and the covenant gifts treasured up in Him: He calls to all the world, “Behold My Servant!” Likewise the gift of the Spirit is described as abundant: “floods upon the dry ground.” The salvation and glory of Israel will be the joy and glory of Jehovah; and the whole creation is called to sympathize with the accomplished redemption.

But all this is fully explained in the New Testament: for now the true Light shineth; the substance has come. The Apostles’ one aim and prayer for their congregation is—that they may know Christ; the unsearchable riches of Christ; the unspeakable gift of God: that they may rest and rejoice, because Christ is all. As God only can explain men’s need of Christ, so God only can unfold whatever He has made Christ to be for us, and the treasures of grace stored up in Him. This is the meaning of the paradox—

“More than all in Thee I find.”

Christ is not merely all that *I* feel I need: He

is God's all, which far transcends my all. He is all that God, in His infinite love, purposes to give to poor and needy sinners. Does man, who is in darkness, need light, the knowledge of God? Behold the abundant Gift. "He that hath seen Me," saith Jesus, "hath seen the Father." "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now we know the Fatherhood of God; for we know Him, to whom the Father saith "Thou art my Son!" And as Jesus reveals the Father, so from Jesus we receive the Holy Ghost, and thus our knowledge is the knowledge of God in Christ by the Spirit. "In Thy light shall we see light." And this is the light, manifested on Golgotha, GOD IS LOVE.

Was our conscience burdened with guilt and our heart with fear? In Christ we have not merely pardon and the assurance of God's favour—but we are made the righteousness of God in Christ: Divine righteousness is given to us. We are not merely acquitted, but accepted: not merely accepted, but accepted in the Beloved; so that the infinite delight of the Father, which rests on Christ, rests also on Christ's people. Oh, what a discovery was this to Martin Luther—who was surrounded with crucifixes, but to whom no one preached Christ crucified—when he read in that Bible, of which the Church of Rome was not so much the custodian as the jailer, that righteousness was given to man by God, even His own righteousness: that Christ is our righteousness; and that better than the innocence of unfallen Adam and the purity of the holy angels, is that robe, which now enfolds us; that we are bound up in the bundle of life, with Christ, who is the infinite delight of the Father, because He laid down His life for the sheep.

Beyond all our conceptions and hopes is also the life which God gives us in Christ. Our adoption is not merely legal, but real: that is—we have received by grace not merely the position and privileges of children; but by the resurrection of Christ and the renewing power of the Spirit we have been born again, of incor-

ruptible seed: we *are* the sons of God. In Christ and for Christ's sake are we children, born, so to speak, out of Christ by the Spirit: nay, Christ Himself is our life. And thus we have not merely higher aims—more powerful and persuasive motives to serve God—but a new nature. We are one with Christ; members of the Body, of which He is the Head, and in which He lives and energizes. Is this not "more than all" we could ever have imagined?

But let us descend to the need, the sorrow, the trial, of daily life. For—and this I omitted in the first part—man needs One, to guide, comfort, strengthen, and uphold him day by day in the duties, afflictions, perplexities, and temptations of life. "Neither *life* nor death can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." To some of us death seems a difficulty less great than the daily complications, tasks, and sorrows of life. But throughout all we possess the love of God: we live close to it; nay, in it—enfolded by it. Jesus is Immanuel: He is with us "all the days;" and therefore every day. "Oh," it is easy to say, "God loves us." But when we most need to know the love of God, and to rest in it; when all things are against us, and when our heart fails us—it is impossible to see that God loves us, except by the light of the great argument: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Truly great consolations we need and encouragements when the consciousness of sin, when the discoveries of our sinfulness, of our weakness, of our dangers, oppress us—the assurance "My sheep shall never perish"; "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it." And with all these precious promises, we possess a living, Divine, loving Comforter: a testimony personal from a Divine Person to our own spirit; the witness of the Holy Ghost, that we are the Sons of God. All through, from, *in* Christ. Is it not true?—

"More than all in Thee I find."

Lastly: *As to our Future*. "What is your Life?" asks James in his epistle: "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!"

And yet man knows that his spirit, his individuality, will exist always: his soul, his true life, himself, is of infinite value to him. In Christ Jesus each believer has an everlasting and blessed existence: he himself, his own individuality, possessing his own distinguishing name; and yet one with all the saints. We shall be with Christ; we shall be like Christ; and we shall inherit—oh, I cannot understand it, but Christ says we shall inherit—"all things!"

III.

If Christ is absolutely necessary, if Christ is absolutely sufficient, the only question remaining, and it comes with great intensity, is this—**IS CHRIST ACCESSIBLE?** May I go to Him? will He receive me? A house built on a strong foundation, with beautiful spacious rooms, and covered with a substantial roof—but without a door by which I can enter—what use would it be to me? But Christ Himself is the Door; and the Door is open. This is very clear in itself. Christ is God's gift. Our very need of Christ; and the fact, that God has sent and given Christ to supply all our need—contains in itself the assurance that Christ is ready to receive us. The Spirit testifies; the Saviour calls; the Father commands. Jesus is Alpha; and there is no letter before Alpha. We must begin with Him. He is the ladder rooted in our deepest need and ruin; and we need no ladder to the ladder, for none can go down so deep to where we actually are. There is the strait gate and the narrow path. Try and draw the picture. Which would come first? Of course the gate; it leads to the path. It is close before the sinner. But men fancy they must first walk for some time in the—or rather in some—narrow path, before they can come to the gate.

What appears easy in theory is, however, difficult in practice. It is often the truly anxious who feel the greatest difficulty. There are three tendencies in man, which make him doubt the absolute accessibility of Christ. First, we find it difficult to take in the idea of **FREE GRACE** as an absolute gift. Who will give us anything for nothing?—and least of all can we expect it from One whom we have treated with ingratitude and

hatred? The second difficulty is—that we dread contact with God Himself. We are willing to think, read, and hear about God; to do things we know God commanded; and even in a kind of way to pray to God (on the faint assumption that some time or other we will really come to God and lay the foundation!): but to go direct to God, and thus to meet God in Jesus Christ—is a great difficulty. Lastly, we shrink from having anything *definitely* concluded, transacted, fixed, between God and us. (This aversion shows itself in the anxiety men have to think, that even the Last Judgment is not final.)

The Church of Rome has illustrated these three tendencies in man. She places the narrow path before the strait gate—good works; ceremonies; and all kinds of preparatory self-denials, sacrifices, and efforts. Secondly, she places God and Christ at a great distance, breaking the immense and awful distance (or, in other words, the infinite and awful *nearness*) by mediators. The Virgin Mary is supposed to have greater sympathy and compassion than the Lord. And thirdly, instead of giving *present* salvation and assurance of acceptance, she substitutes an indefinite hope in herself, or a guarantee for ultimate salvation—after, perhaps, thousands of years of purgatory. She promises *security*, the best that can be obtained—instead of the conviction, the assurance, the joy of faith. “Come unto Me,” saith Jesus, “and I will give you *rest*.”

The great difficulty men feel is—to concentrate their attention on Christ, and Him only. They feel they are too unworthy: or that they would like to wait till they are more worthy; or till they see more signs and evidences of the Spirit's work within them. Many and various forms this difficulty assumes; and there is only one remedy—to look unto Christ only. The most striking illustration of this we find in the gospel narratives. A sinful woman is brought before Christ. Many are her accusers. She is overwhelmed with the sense of her guilt. At last all the accusers have left: but it is not the absence of the accusers—it is the presence of Jesus, the all-merciful Pardoner—which brings peace to the heart. The thief on the cross shows most clearly the way of salvation. It has often been said

that the lesson of this narrative is—that a sinner was saved at the last moment of his life, that none may despair; and only one, that none may presume. I do not think this is the meaning of this wonderful story. We must all be saved in the same manner. The dying thief was hemmed in between the past, which was sin—and the future, eternity; and between these two he had nothing else to cling to but Christ. And because he saw Christ only, he turned to Christ; and Christ turned to him in abundant mercy.

We should point out the striking method of Christ in His dealings with men. When good, righteous, virtuous, and religious men come to Him, He makes the greatest difficulties; nay, He represents eternal life as utterly beyond man's reach. So He says to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again;" and to the rich young man He proposes a task, of which He Himself says: "With man it is impossible." But when the greatest sinners come to Him, He makes no difficulty whatever: He receives them at once. So He says of the woman, whom He allows to kiss His feet: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." Not because He did not know the number and gravity of her transgressions—but because He is Jesus, He received her who believed in Him. Christ defends the sinners who draw near to hear Him. Christ explains His position, surrounded by publicans and sinners, as the position of Jehovah: "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

But it is also necessary to show that there is no difference between Jesus on His heavenly throne, and Jesus on earth. The feeling expressed in that beautiful hymn for children—

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,"

is natural; but it is not founded on truth and fact. For this is the glory of Jesus at the right hand of God—that He receiveth sinners; that He gives repentance and remission of sins; and that to all who trust in Him, He is "a merciful and compassionate High Priest." God exalted Him highly, and gave Him a name above every name. And what is that name? Not a name

descriptive of His sovereignty and Omnipotence; but the name **JESUS**, which means in the words of David, "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

In preaching the absolute necessity, sufficiency, and accessibility of Christ, we preach our own—our daily—experience. Our need of Jesus leads us to repentance, to godly sorrow, to humility, and to constant prayer. The wonderful perfection of Christ and His work is the object of our faith, thanksgiving, and joy. And the never-varying, patient, loving, and tender readiness of Jesus to receive us, while it humbles us, keeps our hearts in meekness, and in compassionate, hopeful love. Thus, in preaching Christ, we preach Him whom our soul loveth. In saying to others "Come unto Christ!" we say what is the sweetest word to our own hearts.

CHRIST IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL: this will invest our preaching with solemnity and earnestness. **CHRIST IS ALL:** this will give us fulness of understanding and of joy. **CHRIST IS WILLING TO RECEIVE THE SINNER:** this will bring us into communion with the loving heart of Jesus. Oh that Christ may Himself speak by us, so that they who hear us—may hear not merely the words, but the **VOICE**, of our blessed Lord Jesus.



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" III.—Hints for Beginners	" X.—Wesley and Whitefield in the Open-Air
" IV.—Rob Roy and Gawin Kirkham	" XI.—Some Celebrated Sermons
" V.—The Gospel on the Racecourse	" XII.—Open-Air Preaching in Ireland
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