

HE DIED FOR ALL

A SERMON

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“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” 2 Corinthians 5:15

I NOTICE our text under the three-fold aspect in which it may be presented; the first thing shall be that of *explanation*, for our text will need a little explanation; the next thing is that of *consecration*; “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again;” the third and the last point, will be *the reasons why they are to live thus unto him*; it is, because he “died for them;” that is a good reason, “and rose again,” that is another good reason, these are powerful reasons; and bless the Lord, they are not mere *letter* reasons, but *living* reasons, that are brought into the soul, whereby the soul is constrained unto all that of which the Lord here speaks.

We notice then first the EXPLANATION. The apostle says, “he died for all.” It is a very common thing for men to assert from our text that Jesus Christ died for the whole human race; and hence many have asked, did he not die for all? Certainly, he did, but the question is, what that *all* is? Why, I am prepared to prove to you, and that is the reason I have chosen the word nation to commence our subject with this morning; I am prepared to prove that so far from the word all in our text, meaning all the human race, it does not mean even all for whom Christ died, so that men are most egregiously mistaken when they apply these words as expressive of Christ's dying for the whole human race; when the apostle's words do not only not refer to the idea of Christ dying for the whole human race, but the words of our text do not mean even all for whom Christ died; so far are men out in their pretended interpretation of the text. Go back to the first verse of this epistle, and let that be your guide; and you will find the apostle is there writing to special persons; “unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in all Achaia.” Now we thus judge, if Christ died for all these persons constituting this church of Corinth, for to them he is speaking; we thus judge, that if Christ died for all these saints that are in all Achaia; then we judge that they were all dead, that is that they were under circumstances that needed that death, that they were all alike dead in trespasses and in sins. You observe the apostle here passes by what they were by practice; passes by the differences that nature, and providence, and circumstances, might have made among them while in a state of nature; and comes direct to the very nucleus, the very root, the very foundation, the very fountain of their condition, that all were dead, as though he should say, whatever differences there might have been among you in other respects, there was no

difference in this respect; for in Adam all died; and therefore, all were dead in trespasses and in sin; and that he died for all those persons constituting the church; that is to say the church at Corinth. This is the apostle's meaning. Therefore, it is important, and essentially so too, that we should not wrest the Scriptures; for if we do so, it is to our own destruction. Let then, friends, the first verse of this Epistle explain our text; that the all here will mean the Church of Corinth, and mean also all the saints that were in all Achaia; and that he died for all these; "that they which live," for some are fallen asleep, some are gone to glory; and there is nothing there in them, nothing around them, nothing connected with them, to hinder them from living unto God; "That they which live," they that are not gone home to glory, but are still living on the earth, "should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." The all, therefore, here means, I say neither the whole human race, nor even the whole chosen race; but only the all, the persons that constituted the church, the all, that were saints, of whom the apostle speaks in the first verse.

You observe that all through the Scriptures, wherever the death of Christ is spoken of in connection with the people for whom he died, you will always find that the Word of God puts his death and their eternal welfare inseparably together: they are nowhere separated, If his death be called a redemption, then in connection with this truth it is said, that "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and shall come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be unto them." And if his death be called an offering, then it is said that, "He has by his one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified." And if his death be spoken of as the fulfilment of his suretyship-responsibility in his pastoral character, then you will find that he places the laying down of his life, as the Good Shepherd, is inseparably connected with the eternal life of the sheep. You will find, therefore, all through the Scriptures that the death of Christ, and the eternal welfare of the people for whom he died, are placed inseparably together. There are plenty of people in the world who say there are some in hell for whom Christ died; but they have never yet been able to bring a Scripture to prove that; they are persuaded that it is so merely on the ground of their own inference; but they have never yet found a Scripture to prove it, and they never will. Thus then, if you look at the fact, friends, that the apostle is here speaking to the Corinthians, those who were the church of God and were saints at Corinth, you will see that his meaning is, that Christ died for all these; and that Christ's death and their coming to Zion; Christ's death and their eternal perfection; Christ's death and their eternal life, are inseparably placed together. How, then, do men become members of the true church of God? I will begin, with this assertion, that man has no hand whatever in making himself a member of the Church; man can have no hand in it whatever. There is but one way in which a man can become a member of the church of the living God; and that way is described in the Scriptures under various forms, upon which I will not now enlarge; suffice it to say this, that regeneration is the only way into the church of the blessed God. You read in the first chapter of Peter, of being "Born again of an incorruptible seed, that lived and abided forever." I will ask this one question in the presence of this assembly this morning. Look for one moment at the soul dead in trespasses and sins; the soul under the grasp of God's eternal law, the soul under the omnipotent wrath of the everlasting God, dead in trespasses and in sins; and that the only remedy is, that that immortal soul shall be born of an incorruptible seed, that lives and abided forever. Why, infant sprinkling and confirmation, and various other ceremonies that are set forth by men as having something to do with making a man a Christian, I boldly assert this morning, in your presence, that infant sprinkling and their formality of confirmation, their consubstantiation, their transubstantiation, whatever ceremonies they use, I make no hesitation in saying that these

ceremonies have no more hand in making a Christian, than these ceremonies helped to make the world. I suppose no one would start the proposition that sprinkling helped to create the world; you would at once see how absurd it was if anybody should start the idea that some ceremony had something to do with the formation of the first Adam. And yet the making of a Christian is compared to the creation; "Created of God in Christ Jesus." So then, my hearer, if you are not a member of the church of the blessed God by being born of God, you cannot be a member in any other way. What does a member mean? A member means one that is one sympathetically with the body, with the main body; the members of the body literally sympathize one with the other. And so, if you are born of God, you will have the same soul trouble, the same convictions, the same discouragements, the same castings down, the same trembling's, and the same fears, which all the members of the church of God in all ages have experienced; and you will have the same longings after mercy, you will have the same illuminations; your mind will be enlightened; you will see that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes; and you will see that you must be saved from first to last by grace; and thus you will begin to sympathize with the man that is like yourself; you will presently meet a man that is all ceremony, and you have no sympathy with him; you meet with some free-will person that says Christ died for all, but only some are saved, and you have no sympathy with him, because his religion cannot save you; and then you meet with another, with a self-contradictory gospel, that tells you there is an elect, and the others might be saved, if they pleased; and a little soul trouble will turn you away from that; and you will begin to weep with them that weep; and when the Lord enlightens your mind, seals home the word with power, and brings you to realize your election of God; then you rejoice with them that do rejoice. That is the way that men become members of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bring me as many such men as you please of this character; bring me thousands, bring me millions, billions, trillions, go to the very height of all the powers of arithmetic; I care not how many you bring, I will grasp them all in the language of our text, and say, Christ died for all these; there is not a man among them all for whom Christ did not die; the very circumstance of their being brought to feel their need of his death is a proof that he died for them. So, then, he died for them; that henceforth, they which live in this way, should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again.

I now notice in the next place the CONSECRATION. I notice the life of self-denial which those persons live. One of the points we do not, in our day, practically reach. And you observe as we go along, in thus living to God, what a glorious substitution the Lord has, for that that we leave; we have to leave one thing, and the Lord puts something infinitely better into the place of that we have to leave. We have to leave another thing, and the Lord puts something into the place of that also, infinitely better. We have to leave another thing, very dear to nature, and the Lord puts something into the place of that also, infinitely better. Some have had (it may not be our lot, I should not think it would,) to leave something else, and the Lord has put something into the place of that, infinitely better. Now, this contrast rises before the mind; and although we are, all of us, partakers, and shall be after the flesh, of the worst part, yet having a knowledge of the better part, there will be a carrying out, practically, of the consecration spoken of in our text. Let us then, first glance at the points I have named. "The grace of God that brings salvation unto all men," for so that Scripture should be rendered. Notice that, friends, "The grace of God, that brings salvation unto all men." Oh, how different is that from the testimony men bear; they speak to us as though we could come to that salvation; but the word of God says, "The grace of God that brings salvation unto all men;" that is, men of all nations, men of all casts of character; wherever the Lord's people are: for they

shall be a people out of all nations, kindreds and tongues; “The grace of God that brings salvation unto all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” Here is what is to be rejected. Now comes the substitution; there is something that is to be put into the place of unrighteousness, of a want of sobriety, of ungodliness; “And that denying ungodliness, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” Ah, say you, but we want something beyond the negative, a negative is of no avail by itself, because it leaves a dreadful vacancy, leaves a dreadful space. Well, listen to the substitution; “Looking for that blessed hope;” ah, blasting and mildew rest upon every hope that is under heaven; that is, every fleshly, worldly and carnal hope, all is withering away. But this blessed hope is a hope full of immortality, the hope of eternal life, eternal salvation, and eternal glory. And it is a sure hope, it cannot fail. “Looking for that blessed hope”, that better life, that better glory; “And the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” I like that, “zealous of good works.” I understand that two ways. First, zealous of God’s good work; that makes me so zealous of eternal election, for that is a good work; it must have been a good work that gave me to Christ. It makes me zealous of the Savior’s life and death, for they were good works. Makes me zealous of the work of the blessed Spirit in quickening the soul, in illuminating the mind, revealing Christ, confirming the believer in the truth. It makes me zealous of the good work of God, taking the man with eternal certainty and triumph into everlasting glory. The resurrection of the body will be a good work; and giving us an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be a good work; and eternally justifying and glorifying us by the Lord Jesus Christ will be good works; so that we shall look “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people;” they are a peculiar people; there is no loose generality about it; no, it is a good home, a well ordered plan; and they shall be “zealous of good works.” And they are zealous also on the other side of good works; what these high Calvinists do, they do quietly; what the others do, they make a tremendous noise about; they get a great many trumpets blown about it; many of them will put their names down on the subscription list of some Society for £20 a year, when they cannot pay 20 farthings in the pound of what they owe; whatever these people do they do ostentatiously. But listen to what the Savior says, “When you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does; and when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.” I cannot go too high; as I have often said, the Lord was not half way up Jacob’s ladder, he was at the top; and we are not to sing half way up the mountain of Zion, but you are to sing on the height of Zion; and Jesus is ascended far above all heavens. ”Looking,” then, “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing,” not grievous appearing, but glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior;” he has nothing against them; when he shall appear, “he shall appear without sin,” without accusations against them, “the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Second. While they are thus to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously, looking for this blessed hope, they are also to deny self-righteousness; that is another sense in which they are to deny themselves; not a vestige of free-will in eternal things, not a vestige of duty faith; we will not take from a thread to a shoe latchet anything of the flesh. No! we must renounce the whole, having no confidence in the flesh. But then, say you, what will the Lord put in place of this? Just what he put in place of Joshua’s filthy rags; clothed him with a change of

raiment. If I renounce my righteousness, what will he put in the place of it? Just what he put in the place of the prodigal's wretchedness, with which he was clothed; "Bring forth the best robe." Therefore, when we have the everlasting righteousness of Jesus, we renounce all confidence in our own; and by looking for this blessed hope, and by receiving Christ's righteousness, we draw near to God, and live unto him. Third, and I come now to a point very tender, a point upon which I shall not succeed much. The Word of God says some very hard things about covetous people, and Judas and Demas, Balaam, Sapphira, Ananias, and others; they made sad work of it, prizing a little silver and gold above God's truth. This is a point that touches a great many very, very close; but still I will abide by my idea; and say that with all the symptoms of covetousness, which even some good people show, and all their want of liberality to God's cause, God's ministers, and God's truth, and God's poor; yet such persons, with all their drawbacks, I mean now those that feel their need of the truth, when put to the test, would readily, much as they love their money, part with it all rather than part with one particle of God's truth. Then, the fourth thing we must deny, which is very hard to flesh and blood, is the friendship of the world. "You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." If we come in the spirit of the world, the world will hear and receive us; but if we come in God's truth, then we are everywhere spoken against. Never mind, you may depend upon it, if our religion is such as the world can approve, there is something the matter. For instance, be united closely with electing grace, that will bring the frown of the world upon you; be united closely with the order of Christ's eternal priesthood, with God's immutable oath, that will bring the frown of the world upon you; and the truths you are united with, being thus offensive to the carnal mind, you must expect to be hated and despised! and you will need a good share of experience of your own as to your need of the truth, and as to what the truth is to enable you to stand fast. Oh, it is so pleasing when men speak well of us, so very pleasing, I hope that all that hear me in this hall will not speak well of me; I should be very sorry if none were offended; I should really think I had not done God's service. I expected last Lord's-day evening that two or three hundred would go out when I gave out the text, but they stuck to it, and I was pleased to see that, (so that there may be some in that respect better than I expected, more lovers of the truth than I anticipated.) But still, at the same time, if we are on the side of God's truth, we must be hated for the truth's sake, but never mind; we must regard all the opposition and persecution we meet with as so many hints that we are not the soldiers of his satanic majesty; for if we were of the world, the world would receive us. But what shall we have in the place of the world's frowns; what shall be our recompence? "Blessed are you," said the Savior, "when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my namesake; rejoice in that day, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." One more point of self-denial, upon which we can only theorize, we are not called upon to undergo, in this country at any rate; namely, to deny our own life, to lay down our own life, rather than part with God's truth. But although we are not called upon to do so, yet it is right we should examine ourselves by the Word of God as to whether we have the spirit of martyrdom; do we so value the truth that, God giving us grace, we would rather lay down our life than part with that truth? That is a question that each ought solemnly to ask himself.

Lastly, these people for whom the Savior died, are to "live unto him which died for them, and rose again." These are the reasons assigned. Let me look at his death for a moment. When Christ died, all my past, my present, my internal, my external, my future sins, died; they lost their life; and for one sin to appear at the bar of God against you that thus receive his truth in the love of it, would be a demonstration of the defectiveness of his death; his death finished transgression. You can get to the end of it only by his death. His death made an end of sin; and you can get to the end of it

only by his death: his death before you were born; his death eighteen hundred years ago, made reconciliation for iniquity; it is done, his death brought in eternal righteousness, established eternal peace; it is done, when Christ died the curse of the law was ended; there is no more wrath, "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." There is no more curse; away with your religion that tells me the Lord will bring a curse upon me for this and for that, will bring a curse upon the people in whom he will not behold iniquity, in whom he will not see perverseness. What? Is there any enchantment against the people for whom Christ died, any divination against his Israel? Often are good men afraid to pray, to open the Bible, to go to hear the Word, lest the minister should have a message of condemnation that will cut up all their hope, and send them away in black despair. But fall back upon the Savior's work, upon the Savior's death; and if your sin seems to seek your life, if the threatening's of the word seem to seek your life, if Satan seems to seek your life; if tribulations seems to seek your life, and you think you shall never get over them; or if you have adversaries that seem to seek your life; the Lord comes in with one fell swoop, and cuts the whole of them down with this declaration; "They are dead that sought your life." It is Christ that lives; not your sins, not the curse, not Satan, not tribulations, not adversaries, he has obtained the victory, the warfare is accomplished, the iniquity is pardoned. We live in a day when we have but very few ministers who know enough of the necessity, and excellency, and power, and use, and certainty, and glory of the death of Christ, to talk about it half an hour; whenever they attempt to climb the steps of Zion, down they come; and belabor poor old Adam, laboring to make the Ethiopian white, to rub out the spots of fallen nature; and after all, it remains as it was. Why do these men dwell so little upon the death of Christ? Because they do not know it; for "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." If I have in my heart abundance of life, and light, and truth, and wisdom, and the Spirit of God, and the Christ of God, and the presence of God, and the grace of God, if my heart abound with these things by the death of the dear Redeemer; then I shall break forth concerning that death as the people did of old in the wilderness of drought; "Spring up, O well, sing you unto it;" the well of salvation, that will never, never, run dry. Ah, my hearers, at the very threshold of heaven, the song there is, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." I cannot say much more. I have said as nothing; what I have said, is a mere whisper concerning the death of Christ in comparison with what it is. In the first place I cannot find language to tell you of that delight which the everlasting God has in the achievements of his dear Son. "Therefore, does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." God rests there, delights there, and dwells there forever; and if you ever dwell with God, it must be by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Does not what I have now said concerning the death of Christ account for one very peculiar circumstance in the Bible, a very conspicuous circumstance? If you ask what that is, my answer is in one sentence; the sacrificial service of the Old Testament. What was the theme in the morning and in the evening? The lamb slain. Which was the way of escape from the angel of death. The lamb slain. What was the theme on festive occasions? The lamb slain. There was no access to God without sacrifice; that was the truth constantly taught. Calculate if you can the pecuniary worth of all the lambs, sheep, and oxen, that for so many thousands of years were on Jewish altars slain; and yet the value would amount to a mere straw in comparison of that great Antitype, Christ Jesus, the God-Man Mediator, who conquered hell and death, and brought life and immortality to light. But I must add no more.

The Six Sermons preached by Mister JAMES WELLS in Exeter Hall (during the closing of the Surrey Tabernacle) may be had in one part, neatly stitched in a wrapper.