

A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

A SERMON

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“Rise and measure the temple of God.” Revelation 11:1

WE have in addition to what we advanced last Lord's day morning upon this subject to notice this morning the temple of the Lord as *the house of prayer*. We have before observed that all that I can understand by measuring the temple of the Lord, that is spiritually, is to take a careful account of the temple, so as to understand the order and the advantages of the temple: and so thereby be favored to distinguish that temple from all other temples, Jesus Christ is the temple intended in our text; and God dwells in Christ, and with that scripture we closed our discourse last Lord's day morning upon this subject, that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple in this ultimate city founded by the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, as that city, which is to be possessed and enjoyed by all those that are quickened by the Holy Spirit of God, raised up to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus, and to know that it is by grace that they are saved through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. These are the citizens; and they are forever to enjoy that city, and to enjoy this temple. The sum, and substance of what we observed, is that God and the Lamb are the temple thereof. The Lord has been pleased to reveal himself in that relation to men; that Jesus Christ as the literal temple was the way in which the Lord dwelt with the typical people, so Christ Jesus is the way in which God verily dwells with men upon the earth; and therefore the way in which men dwell with God.

My object then, in my discourse this morning is to take a two-fold view further of this temple; to set before you some of its advantages, first, as *a house of prayer*, and secondly as *a place of safety*.

First: First, then, as A HOUSE OF PRAYER. And you will recollect the prayer of Solomon on the occasion of dedicating the temple. And we know that Jesus Christ is the meeting place for prayer, that he is the way of prayer, that he is the house of prayer, that he is that which we are to plead in prayer; that he is that holy temple towards which we are to look when we are in any trouble, let that trouble be what it may, because there is that in Jesus Christ, as the minister of this true sanctuary, and, of this tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, that meets our necessities, let those necessities be whatever they may.

But as our text refers to Jesus Christ as the ultimate temple and to the Lord himself, in whom we are to dwell, God dwelling in the people and the people dwelling in God; I think it important that I should set before you this morning the difference, the contrast between the prayer of Solomon, that belonged to the literal temple, and the prayer of our spiritual Solomon that belongs to the ultimate temple; and you will see that there is a very great difference between the two; a difference enough to make the heart of any poor sinner acquainted therewith to rejoice.

I shall therefore at once proceed to point out those differences, taking of course the 6th chapter of the second book of Chronicles, and then taking the 17th of John, and show the contrast of the two; and try to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. Now first then, in the literal temple you will observe that men had to appear before that temple according to personal merit or personal desert. Hence if a man sinned against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him, and he is brought before the literal temple, that man that sinned there was no mercy for him, no; he was to be requited according to his wickedness; and the righteous was to be dealt with according to his righteousness. Now you must understand there that the penalties belonging to the wicked were temporal, and that the reward belonging to the righteous was also temporal; so that the wicked there must not be understood in the same sense that we understand the state of a wicked man ultimately; nor is the righteous there to be understood in the same sense that we understand a righteous man by the justification or righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence then, for instance, the publican, if he had stood on no better ground than ceremonial sacrifice, if he had stood on no better ground than the old covenant when he came to the temple, he could not have been justified; there was no way, because those sacrifices could not take away sin; those sacrifices could not bring in righteousness. The publican therefore being taught of the Spirit of the Lord, he took a better standing, he was not so anxious about the earthly Holy of Holies, he was not so anxious about the earthly temple, for though that was the locality God had chosen to typify spiritual things, the Holy Spirit being the teacher of the publican, revealed to the publican the atonement of Christ, revealed to him an eternity of mercy that is by the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. And hence we have not, I have often said, and I say so now, we have not in the English version, not that I complain of the translation, the translation is very proper, but at the same time it does not convey the force of the original there: just showing that the publican was favored to take an account of a better temple, that he saw a better sacrifice, a better temple, a better covenant, and a better order of things; and when he said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," the word used there is *ilastheeti*.

I shall just trace out this morning, in order to distinguish them, between appearing before God on the ground of personal worth and desert, as was the law of the literal temple, and appearing before God on the ground of the Savior's personal worth, as is the law of the antitypical, the spiritual, the ultimate temple. Now the very word there *ilastheeti* translated "merciful," is in the 3rd of Romans, for instance, translated "propitiation." Hence says the apostle concerning Christ, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation." Now notice, it is here the same word; a propitiation, that is a reconciliation, an atonement for sin, "a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." "The remission of sins that are past," this is a subject with which the publican was made acquainted. What are we to understand by "the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." I suppose most of us come short in our idea of the meaning of that term; we ought to have had the passive participle, and then it would have read in a way that would give us a clearer understanding: thus, through his blood

and his righteousness, for both are mentioned in that verse as the propitiation, the remission of sins that are passed: that is, God, the Father did pass our sins over from us to the Lord Jesus Christ; and the people whose sins are so passed, or were so passed, over to Christ, are spoken of as the elect according to the foreknowledge of God; these sins were passed over to Christ, were laid upon Christ, the Lord has laid upon him the iniquities of us all; that is one part of the meaning, the remission of sins that are passed; that is, they are passed over by the Father by imputation unto Christ Jesus.

Then, secondly, the sins that are passed, means that the Lord Jesus Christ has passed them away, that he has sacrificially put them away, that he has atoned for them; that he has thrown them into the land of oblivion. And they are electively or imputatively passed over. And then, thirdly, it means evidentially passed over, for the man that knows enough of his state to appreciate the atoning blood of Christ, and to appreciate the righteousness of Christ, and to know that there is no other way of access to God.

Here then I say that sins passed, means that sins are passed over evidentially. If I am brought to know my state, and place my hope in what Christ has done, that is an evidence that my sins are passed over unto him; and the consequence is that sin must ultimately become a nonentity. Hence the late Mister Triggs used to say sin was a nonentity; he was unwise in making that declaration as to the present tense; I knew what he meant; he meant that sin was virtually a nonentity; but by saying it was now a nonentity, he staggered some, and gave his adversaries an advantage over him; Therefore do not let us take that position; the position we take is this; that seeing our sins were passed over to Christ, and seeing that Christ has sacrificially put them away, and seeing that the Holy Spirit has testimonially put them away, has shown us the way in which they are put away, they are virtually nonentities. They are anything now but a nonentity; alas, alas, they are tremendous giants; they curl round us like serpents, they roar against us like lions, and they corrupt us like the leprosy; they are anything but a nonentity. But bless the Lord they are virtually a nonentity; that is to say, the time shall come when mortality shall put on immortality, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, then shall be brought to pass the saying "O death where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God that gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ." Now then, my hearer, the publican did not find any such ultimate transfer of sin; as this in the literal sacrifice; but he did find it in the one sacrifice, he did find it in the propitiation which the Holy Spirit showed him; and on these grounds, while he would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, he left Christ to lift up his eyes for him; then Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven. And when did Jesus lift up his eyes to heaven? Just as he was entering upon his atoning department, to face that the publican could not face, and as John Bunyan says very beautifully, the publican stood afar off to leave room for a mediator, and the publican smote upon his breast; and while he was in this trouble, for I am a personal witness, and I trust hundreds of you are as well, that many times when we do not feel we are praying, we are ruminating, we are cast down, we are unhappy, we are grieved, we wish we had never existed; the Lord, while we are sunk in such a state, when we do not seem as though we were praying, throws in a ray of light into the mind concerning Jesus Christ; up springs hope, and then prayer bursts out and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner," as soon as ever a sinner sees that there is a way in which God can be just, and yet save by grace.

Here then we might well indeed take account of this temple, seeing that it is the way of access to God, the way in which we may approach our God and plead in a dear Redeemer's name, for that mercy without which, sinners as we are, we must perish forever. And then if I trace this word further, I still find it the same. I go to the 2nd of Hebrews, "Wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation;" the same word the publican used, *ilastheeti*, "reconciliation." He saw an atonement of reconciliation; he saw an atonement that would take away all the injury that sin had done, repair the dishonors of law and of justice, repair the dishonor done to the great name of the Creator; and repair the dishonors that sin has done to our persons, and present us before the Holy One, clothed with immortal honor, never to be dishonored again, never to be corrupted again, never for a breach to creep in again, never a spot, a wrinkle, or any such thing to settle upon us again. There are volumes contained in that prayer, the very original words themselves: *O Theos, ilastheeti moi to amarlolo* are engraved in my memory till they are Anglicized, almost become English, because there is such an intensity in them. But again, in the 9th of Hebrews this very word is there called the mercy-seat, the cherubim of glory, and I take those cherubim's of glory to mean mystically the ministers of the gospel, they are cherubim's of glory. Cherubim signifies knowledge, and the man that is sent of God has a knowledge of the things he preaches to others, and he preaches a glorious Christ, and a glorious victory and a glorious God, and a glorious kingdom, and a glorious salvation, and it is all glorious from first to last; the mercy seat, same word that the publican used; here is still reference to Christ, John in his Epistle catches up the very word, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation," same word, "for our sins." Here then, my hearer, in the old testament, if the publican had appealed to God on the earthly ground, he would have been turned away, he could not have obtained mercy on the ground of personal worth, or personal merit. Thus then, in this new temple faith does all the work, there it was works, "The man that does these things shall live in them," and it is but natural life after all; but "he that believes, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed;" not actively, I have no objection to admit the active idea, but "passed from death to life;" we must understand that in the passive sense, He that believes on me, is actively, by his own doing, passed from, death unto life, that is not the meaning, the passive participle: and the meaning is, that God the Falsar has come and lifted the man out of his death and passed him over into life, that Jesus Christ is come, taken him up into his hands, passed him over out of death into life, that the Holy Spirit has come and quickened the man, handed him over out of death into life; and. who shall pluck them out of the Savior's hands? who shall pluck, them put of my Father's hands? and who shall hinder the omnipotent Spirit who has brought them into life from carrying on his work unto the day of Jesus Christ? when these citizens of the heavenly city shall appear in the glory of that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Well now, in Solomon's prayer sin put them to the worse before the enemy: "If your people be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned." Sin put them to the worse before the enemy. Where would you be if you stood on that ground, if the devil were allowed to tear you to pieces in proportion to your sin? if left to the world and the contempt of hypocritical professors, that live upon nothing else but the faults and the sins of other people, especially the Lord's people; where would you be? where would you go to? I should be glad to go and hide myself, I know that, if I had no better ground than that to stand upon. That is the old temple, put to the worse before the enemy. But in the new temple it is written, "The warfare is accomplished, the iniquity is pardoned, and she has received of the Lord's hands double for all her sins;" grace here, and glory

hereafter. And here the Christian stands and rejoices as the Jew could not, the Christian stands upon the vantage ground of an accomplished warfare; and our rejoicing is that Christ was never put to the worse before the enemy; and if he were not we shall not: we gain the victory by the blood of the Lamb, victory over sin, over Satan, over the world, over death by-and-bye, victory over hell, and that forever. Mighty difference between the two. In the one case sin may so put them to the worse before the enemy that they may lose everything, which they did ultimately, as you know. Then again, sin in that economy could shut up heaven. "When the heaven, is shut up, and there is no rain." And there are some men now that preach such a gospel as that; why, it would drive me mad if I believed one word of it. But do not you believe it then? I do not believe such language belongs to the new temple, to the eternal temple. "If heaven be shut because they have sinned." What is the language of the new temple? "I have set before you an open door, and none can shut it." What, are you going to tell me that the sin that is in you this morning shall hinder the Holy Spirit if it be his pleasure making the truth of God descend upon your soul as the rain, distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and the showers upon the grass? I appeal to you that are Christians; I ask if after some of your worst doings, I was going to say, I mean your most rebellious moments, when you have been provoked and tried by the world; and felt like a wild bull in a net, when you have expected judgment would come in and cut you down, instead of this is it not a solemn fact, can you not to the honor of a covenant God bear testimony of it, that at that very time when you have expected to be cut down, God's truth has descended on your soul as the rain, distilled as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass; you have been melted down, and have wondered at the mercy of God.

Dissolved by your goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found.

Here than in the new temple is an open door, never to be shut by sin, by Satan, by the world; for Christ says, "I am the door," who can shut him? "I am the door," says Christ, and who can close him against a sinner? Not sin, for he has closed sin; not Satan, for he has conquered Satan; not the world, for he has overcome the world; not death, for he has overcome death. Ah, our song still is, and ever shall be, while we travel in this vale of tears,

The door of your mercy stands open all day,
To the poor and the needy who knock by the way:
No sinner shall ever be empty sent, back,
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus' sake.

Your gates shall never be shut night nor day. Again, "If there be dearth in the land," because they have sinned against you: but what sin can destroy Christ the bread of life? Can there be any dearth in this gospel land? Yes, there will be when Christ ceases to be in the gospel, when Christ ceases to be in God and God in Christ, when Christ ceases to be Christ. "If there be dearth," that is the language of that dispensation, "If there be blasting or mildew," but the language of the new covenant is, "I will restore to you the years that the locust have eaten, the canker worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer, worm, and you shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that has dealt wondrously with you, and my people," this new covenant people, "shall never be ashamed." Measure the temple, take account of it, see what a door of access is open to our God; bless his dear name for ever and forever. "If there be blasting." Who can blast

God's truth? who can blast God's Christ? A great many of my earthly hopes, and a great many of your earthly hopes and comforts I suppose, have been blasted, I, suppose you will bear me witness of this but who shall blast your heavenly hopes, your eternal consolations? Shall mildew reach the heavenly inheritance; and rest upon that, and injure that? Will not Jesus retain his freshness, will not the inheritance he holds in hand for us retain its freshness, and that to all eternity? "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof." So that Solomon's prayer stands like an old castle, venerable indeed, just to show the character of the theological architecture of that age, and of that dispensation; and so we would not have the prayer taken away, we venerate it, and we see, I say, what kind of theological architecture belonged to that age, and to that dispensation. And then when we come away from that house toward the house not made with hands, we say, what an infinite improvement there is in architecture in it, how much better the second than the first; how lofty, how glorious. Well might the Savior say of this second house, "In my Father's house are many mansions." I wish you to understand these matters, friends, more and more. You know you will soon have to cross the Jordan, and as the Israelites could cross the literal Jordan only by the literal ark, the literal mercy seat, and the literal priests, so you can cross the mystic Jordan in safety only by the ark of the new covenant, that High Priest of the new covenant, the mercy seat of the new covenant, the presence of God after the order indicated in our text. I have said nothing to you upon the word rise, nor shall I suppose, this morning, because I want another sermon or two not on our text, but on that which follows our text: I have said nothing of that rising yet, but will before I have done with it.

Well now, I think you do understand in some measure, indeed I hope you understood it all, before I advanced what I have advanced; I hope before I advanced this, that you could see the mighty difference, excellent as Solomon's prayer is, and great as the privileges which are contained in that prayer, there is, nevertheless, a great deal of *if* running through the prayer, and sin is named in the prayer. Now let me remind you of a prayer wherein there is not one sin mentioned, nor one *if* indicated. In the 17th of John, which we take to be a kind of antitypical prayer, there are five grounds, upon which the Savior prays. Solomon's prayer was on the ground of their repentance and reformation. Well, say you, and is it not so with you? Do not you repent of all your sins? No, nor you either. There never was a man under heaven yet that repented of all his sins, no. Some people say, I repent of every one of my sins. That is a mistake, you are deceiving yourself: and you are attributing, I know you are a kind of sacrificial efficacy to your repentance; it is all delusion. Repentance is a thorough change from death to life, from enmity to love, from pride to humility, from objection to the truth to reception of the truth. But there are five grounds in the Savior's prayer laid out as the basis of his plea before God. The first is his own sacrificial work. "I have finished the work which you gave me to do," and on this ground he prays to be glorified: and that includes his people: he prays to be glorified with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. That is one ground of his prayer, his mediatorial work. And the saints well knew, they were given to understand that Christ's exaltation was proportioned to his work, "You are worthy to take the book; because of what you have done." There it is, so, my hearer, when we come before God let Christ's mediatorial work be the ground, let that be the foundation, let us rest there, and if we rest there we shall never sink.

The second ground of prayer is that of the eternal pleasure of the Father, "I pray not for the world, but for them that you have given me, for they are yours, and yours are mine, and mine are yours;" so we are perfectly agreed. Some of you free-willers almost wish, ah, you silly things, the Lord

open your blind eyes, do not you almost wish the Savior had said, I am sorry, Father, that I am not authorized to pray for the world, but only for them whom you have given me. I suppose yours must be mine, I do not much like it, seeing that they are made mine by election, for you have chosen them; I do not much like it, but I must bow to it I suppose. Ah, my hearer, ask the solemn question, is there not a readiness that none but Christ himself could describe of acquiescence in this sovereignty of God? "I pray not for the world, but for them that you have given me; for they are yours, and yours, are mine, and mine are yours." I am delighted with this order of things, I will make your sovereign pleasure the ground of prayer before you; I may pray for them, for you have given them to me for this very purpose, that I should be their intercessor, their mediator, their redeemer, their God, and their everlasting all. Well may the poet say,

Each believer has for hope a solid ground.

In Solomon's prayer you meet with sin, and I do not know what all, but in this prayer not a word, not a syllable. The third ground. upon which he prays for the people is the work of the Holy Spirit. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them," which I hope will believe on me? No, no; oh no; I want you to watch me here very narrowly, "I pray not for these alone, but for them also which *shall* believe on me," notice that, and do not be less particular in marking the next clause, "through their word." Now Christ had given to the apostles Certain doctrines, and those who were to believe were to believe through their word; and if they did not believe through their word, through their doctrines, their belief was consequently no belief at all; for if any man brought another gospel, and had faith in another gospel, even if an angel did so, he was to be accursed. It is through their word. "He that hears us is of God," said John, "and he that hears not us is not of God; and they went out from us, because they were not of us, for if they had been of us they doubtless would have continued with us;" and said as the true disciples did, "Lord to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life." Here then is the work of the Holy Spirit; they shall believe through their word. And there was a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, a woman of Thyatira, whom providence removes a little further west, over into Europe, for she was the first believer we have an account of in Europe; and the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by James, his epistle might be a little more moderate; but she attended to the things, spoken by the high doctrine man Paul; notice that. And she had such a union of soul to him and his fellow laborers that she said, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there;" and everything I can do to make you comfortable I will; I have not very great means of expressing my love to you, but I must do it some way or another. Here then they shall believe through their word. Mark how things are put together never to be severed; mere professors may sever these things, but the real saints of God shall not put that asunder which God has joined together.

The fourth ground upon which the Savior prayed was the provision in for his people. "Father, I will that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory;" as though he should say, How would it look for the husband to have the possession without the bride; for the foundation to be there without the building; the vine without the branches; the shepherd without the flock, the Mediator without his people? And therefore, as there is a provision for them, I will make that a plea before you; for "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man; the things which God has prepared for them that love him;" and the disciples did love him, and all that are thus brought to know him do love him; and so on that ground

the Savior prayed that they might be brought there; and a good ground it is too. You have a glory you have nothing else to do with but to make poor sinners happy; you have an inheritance which you have nothing to do with but to give to your children. Shall that glory remain in desolation, and that inheritance in desolation? No; they shall come to the inheritance; it is reserved for them in heaven.

Lastly, on this point; the fifth ground upon which the Savior prayed was the love of God; "that the world," Gentile world, and it is come to pass, you see, "may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me." So, it is come to pass. God loved the apostles and loves all his people as he loved Christ; and he loved him before the foundation of the world, then he loved his people before the foundation of the world too, and so though we are strangers with God, he is not a stranger with us, he has known us from eternity, and loved us from eternity, and rests in that love, and ever will do so. Thus then, friends, if we look at the typical dispensation, we see it was excellent; but when the Lord brings in this now temple it is like the sun rising in his splendor; all the inferior lights are eclipsed or out of sight, as though they did not exist, and now our God is all and in all. Thus then, we take account of this temple as the way of access to our God. This way of access is what the apostle calls a new and living way, a more excellent way, that we have boldness by the blood of Jesus to enter into the Holy of Holies.

Second" But I will now, in conclusion, notice the SECURITY. David saw in this temple a security; he saw of all places to dwell, to dwell in Christ was the best place. And now can we say in part with him, if we cannot go all the way with him, we will go all the way with him in sentiment, if we cannot, go all the way with him in confidence and feeling, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord;" in the Christ of God; dwelling in Christ; that is the dwelling place where God dwells, where the soul dwells. "O Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations, even from everlasting to everlasting you are God." "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord," in the Christ of God, "all the days of my life." Are you praying this prayer sometimes? Then I will tell you how the Savior meets you; he meets you, and says, "Abide in me." Ah, let me dwell in this secret place of the Most High, let me abide under the shadow of the Almighty, then no plague can come near my dwelling; a thousand may fall at my side and ten thousand at my right hand, but no fatal evil can befall me here all the days of my life in this world, or in that future world that shall be forever. "For in time of trouble;" are you in real trouble then? since man is born to trouble, as surely trouble arises as the sparks fly upward; the sparks come from the fire, and we have the fire of sin and of God's wrath in our very bones and from ourselves arises, much affliction. "For in time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion;" take me under the care of his royalty. Now just see the beautiful order of things in this security; he will take me under his royalty, his authority, his pavilion; "in the secret of his tabernacle there is the priesthood, there is the temple, there is the mercy seat, "shall he hide me, he shall set me upon a rock;" there is the stability, first I get authority to take me into care: secondly, the tabernacle, the mercy seat, as the order of that care; thirdly, Christ is the Rock, to denote the stability of it, the certainty of it, the strength of it.

And now that I am brought to dwell in the Christ of God all the days of my life, to enquire in this temple, for here I learn what I can learn nowhere else, here I behold the beauty of the Lord, here I can rejoice in the mercy of the Lord, now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies around about me. They may look very lofty, and their eyes may be raised, and their eyelids lifted up, as

the wise man says, but I will look above them, my place of defense is in the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given, and water shall be sure.

Where is the power can reach them there?
Or what shall force them thence.

“Therefore will I oiler in his tabernacle,” not in men’s tabernacle, not in their schemes, and plans, and gospels, but in his tabernacle, where all is yea and amen; “I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy, I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord,” as though he should say, This shall be my eternal employment.