

CONFORMITY

A SERMON

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“Has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” Hebrews 1:2

I HAD intended this morning to have had another sermon upon the 1st verse of the 11th chapter of the book of Revelation; but these words have come to me, and have been talking with me, and I did not feel willing to part with them without saying something concerning the mystery which they contain.

Our text lies before us in four parts. Here is, first, *the Son of God*; here is, secondly, *the time in which the Lord God speaks unto us by the Son of God*, the last days; there is, thirdly, his heirship; and there is, fourthly, *his headship*; indicated by the expression, “by whom also he made the worlds.” But I suppose two of these parts out of the four will be as much as I can get through this morning.

First. We have then, first, to notice *the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ*: and in so doing, my remarks chiefly will be to show how he has come unto us, and how in coming to us he is every way adapted to our necessities. And before I enter upon that part, I cannot forbear saying there is something very instructive when we contrast what he was before his incarnation with what we are before our regeneration. He before his incarnation was God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Now this Divine Person is called the Word with reference to that Mediatorial character, which, in the fullness of time, he would appear in for the accomplishment of salvation. Hence in the 19th of Revelation, where the Savior appears in his complexity, his name is called the Word of God; I think that explains the matter. So that from the beginning he was God, literally God from everlasting, God essentially, God self-existingly; and he was that Word officially, the Word relatively. And this is a very beautiful character in which to represent this Divine Person, because the Word there means everything that the gospel contains; the gospel does not contain anything that is not included in that relation of this Divine Person. And thus, then he was God; and as the Word, or in covenant relationship, he was with the Father; so that whatever the Father’s will was in ordaining sinners to eternal life, and whatever the Father’s will was relative to the ultimate glory of the same people, Jesus Christ, or this Divine Person in

his official relation in the everlasting covenant, was one with the Father. Hence of Christ it is said that “his goings forth were from old, even from everlasting.”

But the point I wish to notice just for a moment’s is what he was not so much officially, but what he was literally, that he was a Divine Person. Throughout the Old Testament he is again and again called Jehovah; this is what he was before his incarnation; and whatever the Father is, that also is that Divine Word; and whatever the Holy Spirit is, that also is the Divine Word. While we see that he before his incarnation is everything that is glorious, infinite in all his perfections, one with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, these three are one; but before our regeneration, we are sinful, we are evil, we are unrighteous, our hearts are full of wickedness, full of everything that must have made us infinitely and eternally loathsome to this Divine Person. What in infinity of contrast there is between this Person before his incarnation and our state before our regeneration. And yet such was the love of God,

“He saw us ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all.”

This Divine Word, to whom we must have been by sin, as far as his nature was concerned, not as far as his will was concerned, but as far as his nature was concerned, we must have been infinitely and eternally loathsome to him, and yet he loved us notwithstanding all; and of course, the same remarks will apply to the Holy and Blessed Spirit. Here then, is an infinity of contrast between this Divine Word and sinners that were in the depths of eternity given unto him. Now then, what is to be done? Yet this Divine Word and these loathsome mortals, these hell born mortals, these poor sinful creatures, that are deadly enemies to their own souls, deadly enemies to God, especially where he is a saving and eternal Friend to them; for there is nothing in the natural mind, no, not even the law of God, does the carnal mind so detest, as it does the true grace of the blessed God. Now what is to be done with these creatures? For this Divine Word and these mortals are to come together, and there must be on his part and infinity of condescension, and there must be on their part very great exultation, before after such a contrast as this conformity between the two shall be brought about. I will now go on to show you what will be nothing new indeed to many of you, I hope to most of you, that while this infinite contrast thus existed, Christ has brought about an entire conformity: and that while he is that Son of God, his people are called the sons of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle in the very next chapter gives us a fourfold view of this beautiful conformity to the great God; for so I may call it; for Adam was created in the image of God; and taking the definition given in Ephesians and in Colossians of the image of God, we have a threefold representation, or three qualities named. “And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;” and then again, “Putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;” or as the margin renders it, “the holiness of truth.” Here then we have knowledge, and righteousness, and true holiness. Let us see then how this is brought about; a better knowledge, and righteousness, and holiness than Adam had. Let us notice the fourfold representation, for that we must give merely as a sample; we do not give the fourfold representation as constituting the compass of the whole subject; no, the subject itself is infinite in compass as well as eternal in duration, it has in it all the greatness of the blessed Creator of the ends of the earth. First then, he is represented as establishing perfection. “It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Here then, my

hearer, are you a convinced sinner, convince not only of your imperfection, but convinced of your utter destitution of anything the holy and pure law of God can approve? Ah, then, hear the tidings that the Lord Jesus Christ has made perfect, that is a perfect salvation not for himself; he did not suffer for himself, he suffered for sinners. That suffering which you must have endured to eternity was compassed by the Savior; those curses which must have fallen upon you fell upon him. And hence that Scripture in the 53rd of Isaiah, the marginal reading is very helpful there, and gives us a very solemn idea; where it is said, "He was tormented for our transgressions." I rather like that idea, because when the word of God declares the ultimate penalty of sin it is said, "they, have no rest, but shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Jesus Christ was tormented for our transgressions. Ah, the torments of God's wrath that he underwent; we cannot as we often say, fathom cannot enter into perfection, the depth of it; as Mr. Hart says upon another point,

"We can't discuss,
But this we know, it was for us."

Now then how did the Lord Jesus Christ become perfect? How did he bring in perfect salvation? Why, friends, by making a perfect satisfaction for sin. I have often said, and we live in a day when it ought to be said to, that there is no repentance in the believer, there is no sorrow in the believer, there is no tribulation undergone by the believer, that forms any part whatever of satisfaction for sin, for this would be to indicate a deficiency in the work of Jesus Christ. "To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings;" so that he has brought in perfect satisfaction, he has brought in perfection in every sense. You may bring all the relations of Christ here, which I will not now attempt to do, to show that he has established everyone in perfection. If you take life, for instance, he has swallowed up death in victory, perfectly: there is a perfection in his victory over death; if you take the annihilation or removal of sin, there is perfection; and if you take the establishment of the law of God, there is a perfection of establishment; and the justification of the believer, there is a perfection of justification; and if you take that knowledge to which the believer is ordained, into which he shall come, there shall be a perfection of knowledge; and if you take the joy and the glory, there is to be a perfection of those, and then if you take duration, there is a perfection of duration, there is no end to it; it is to all eternity. Now by this perfection our God speaks to us by his Son. He spoke to the fathers upon the subject all through the Old Testament; there was not one prophet that was not well acquainted with the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ; they saw the promises that he by this perfection should confirm; they saw them afar off, were persuaded of them and embraced them, and were not ashamed to confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and that they sought a better country. Ah, can you say, All hail you Son of God? One might well say, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly;" come into my soul with all your perfection, let me enjoy your perfection, your perfect work; here I am complete, here I am perfect, here I am all that law and justice can not only approve, but admire, for God is well pleased, not merely pleased, but well pleased with this perfection in which the church is to shine forth as the sun in the firmament, and that forever and ever. Here then is the Son of God, having thus wrought this perfection. Here we may approach our God with holy boldness; here we may feel fully assured that our God will never leave us, nor forsake us. My hearer, we cannot make in our prayers, in our confidences, in our preaching, in our movements, in every way, too much of this perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This then is one view I take of the son of God having thus brought in this perfection.

Now see how the contrast is destroyed; I mean the contrast between us in our unregeneracy, existing between him before his incarnation and us before our regeneration; but now being regenerated we receive this perfection. And what is this perfection? Why, it is like himself; as perfect as himself; this perfection makes us like himself; this perfection makes us of one mind with the Father, of one mind with the Savior, of one mind with the Holy Spirit; so that here we have the mind of God, the will of God, the counsel of God, the covenant of God, the promise of God, and, ultimately, shall enjoy the presence of God. Ah, how entire that resemblance; yes, it amounts to something like identity; it seems to go beyond resemblance, it seems to come to something like identity. And hence it is that he is spoken of as the Head, and his people as the members, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Oh, the oneness between God and his people here, by the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ! And now, my hearer, does not our daily experience show us the need of this perfection? I would ask those of you who are favored to live nearest to the Lord, that even if you yourselves, I will not say the great God who can see a thousand faults in us, where we, perhaps, can see no fault; but even we ourselves, if we were to set to work, should easily be able to point out infirmities daily in us, making preaches in our manners, in our doings, and our thoughts, by which the sword of justice might come in and cut us down. But no sooner is this eternal perfection set to our account, then I live not by what I am, but by what Christ is; I live not by my goodness or badness, but by the perfection of Christ; “the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who, love me, and gave himself for me.” Here we may take our stand for life, our stand for death, our stand for judgment, I stand for eternity; as says the apostle, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God;” not only so: “by whom we have access unto this grace,” a perfection, “where in we stand,” in this perfection, “and rejoice” in this perfection, rejoice in Christ Jesus, “in hope of the glory of God.”

Now the second way in which the son of God has come unto us is by covenant relationship. That is another representation given in the next chapter. See the ground upon which he has come to us to thus present us perfect, blameless, before the throne of God. “He that sanctifies, and they who are sanctified are all one.” So, on the ground of this oneness previously formed, that while the contrast I just now referred to existed, the oneness was then in existence, was established; yes, it is the work of our God. Worthless as we are, the great God thought it worth his while to think about us from eternity. He has, if I may attribute an act that is merely human so far to the great God, he has made it his delight to meditate upon our welfare from eternity. His thoughts from all eternity have gone forth in the intensity of his love after us; having loved us with the same love wherewith he has loved his own dear Son. And therefore, Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren. Oh, says one, I would not be seen to walk the streets with one of those election people. Ah, what a different person you are from Jesus Christ; he was seen to die for them; he was seen to shed his blood for them; he is seen by all the angels and saints in heaven to intercede for them; and it is seen in the Bible that he is not ashamed to pray for them. “I pray not for the world, but for them that you have given me.” So then don’t reckon yourself a Christian if you are thus ashamed of election; if you are thus ashamed of Christ’s word, and ashamed of Christ’s true work. If that be the case, I have but one favor to ask of you, and that is not for one moment to conclude you are a Christian; no, but you must reckon yourself however pious and good you may be, you must reckon yourself to be in a state of hostility to God’s truth; so don’t go home and say, “Thank God I am not as other men;” for you are as other men, sir; there is not the slightest difference whatever; “for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness;” in a spirit of bitterness against God’s truth; and, consequently, in the bond of iniquity. Enmity is the evidence that you are one with Satan;

love where it exists becomes the evidence of being one with Christ. So then Jesus Christ came to us; the Son of God came to us on the ground of this relationship; not ashamed to call them brethren. "I will declare your name unto my brethren;" I will not hide anything; I will not hide your righteousness within my heart; I will make it known unto my brethren; I will not hide your love, and your councils, and your doctrines, as though they were what men say they are, dangerous; and so men think they will not preach them; I will not do so; "my praise shall be of you in the great congregation," says Christ in the 22nd Psalm. "I will declare your name and to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise you." And then comes the presentation; at last, he shall say, "Here am I;" where? Why, on Mount Zion, 14th of Revelation; and the people that did their part? Then I am sure I should not be there, not if you understand that in the legal sense. The people that were there by nature not quite so bad as others? Then I should not be there, nor you either, nor anyone. No, that "here am I, and the children," not the people, notice, why are they not called people? Because the theme of these clauses is eternal relationship; and therefore, the Holy Ghost is careful to keep close to the relationship; "Here am I, and the children;" Father, they are your children; they are my children; they are the Holy Ghost's children. And hence Christ, who in the Bible is *never* called the *everlasting* Son, is again and again called the everlasting Father; ninth of Isaiah, everlasting Father; 63rd of Isaiah, "You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; your name is from everlasting." Here Christ is called the everlasting Father, but never called the everlasting Son; though, bless God, he is the everlasting Son; still there is a reason why the Holy Spirit has not used that phrase relative to the Sonship of Christ.

Thus, then he came to us by this perfection, and by this relationship. "Here am I, and the children;" here is relationship; Christ is the Everlasting Father. I was going to say Christ is proud of the relationship; that perhaps, unless taken in a very careful way, would not apply to him; still he does glory in the relationship; "yours they were, and you gave them me; and they have kept your word. And all mine or yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them." And I am sure if this Wondrous Person, who has thus stooped so low to bring about this result, if he be glorified there in and glories there in, how much more may we. To him it was an infinite condensation, to us it is an unmeasurable exultation. The dunghill of infamy and the dust of ruin are our proper places; but he has raised us up from the dust, lifted us up from the dunghill, and set us among princes, even the princes of his people. To him it was infinite condensation, to us infinite exultation. Hence says one, "you are my glory, and the lifter up of my head." Now do you profess religion? What sort of a spirit is yours? Is it the spirit of faith in Christ's perfection? If not, it is not the spirit of faith in Christ. Is it the spirit of faith in this relationship, this in dissolvable, eternal, sovereign grace, saving, and sure relationship? If that be not your spirit, then though you may have grace in your heart you will need much clean water sprinkled upon you to wash away your free will and duty faith dust, and bring you into the pure pastures of eternal truth, to read out the eternal relationship subsisting between the Lord in his people, and bring you to the confession that it has pleased the Lord to make them his people, and that he has made us, and not we ourselves.

But third, the Savior is represented as coming to us also to establish freedom; still keeping up the idea of sonship, that the children were partakers of flesh and blood. Oh shall the High and Lofty One, whose name is Holy, and whose native place is eternity, and to whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers; before whom the nations are as a drop in the bucket, yes, is a very little thing; yes, as vanity, as nothing, and less than nothing; shall this eternal Jehovah stooped so low as to become partaker of their flesh and blood, shall he veil himself in their nature? Shall he

take up a body in which he shall bear their sins on the tree? Ah, angels may well gaze with wonder upon the great mystery of God, not the Son of God, you see, but something more than that, God manifest in the flesh. There is not one scripture that says the Son of God was manifest in the flesh: no; there is a reason for that I will not now stop to explain; but it is "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Yes, the children, notice this, were partakers of flesh and blood; the apostle presents the perfection in relationship, and then goes on to set before us more of the consequences of this relationship. The children were partakers of flesh and blood, let them be partakers of what they may he will be one with them. They are partakers of sin, never mind, I will take their sin: they are partakers of the devil, for they all by nature possess the spirit of the devil; well, I will take the devil and manage him: they are all partakers of wrath, they are children of wrath; and I will take the wrath and put an end to that: they are all children of hell, they belong to hell; I will take their hell, deliver them from that hell, and bring them to my own heaven. Nothing could hinder him.

This is love; not that we loved Christ; not that we loved his divine word, but that he loved us; and as we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part of the same, and that hereby he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; that is, destroy the devil in dominion over the church; not destroy him from his being, but destroy him from his throne, destroy him from his power, and destroy him from his place. Your very soul was the seat of Satan went in your unregenerate state; but now it is the palace of the Holy Ghost; now it is the throne of Jesus, now it is the dwelling place of the most High; as God has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them;" and that he might destroy Satan, then, by destroying sin; "and deliver them, who through fear of death, where all their lifetime subject to bondage." Where is perfection? By the Son of God. Where is eternal relationship? By the Son of God. Where is freedom from the fear of death and from Satanic power? By the Son of God. It is all by the Son of God. Oh, I could stand here, I am not exaggerating, if I had bodily strength, and you had patience, I could stand here till 10 o'clock tonight, and dwell upon one glory after another, pertaining to the Son of God; so infinite is the variety of mystery found in this Wondrous person. You may take that as a boast, perhaps; I say it to the honor of God's grace, that has entwined my intense affections about his Wondrous Person. And, my hearer, does not this convey the idea of the blessedness of the fact that eternity itself will be none too long to enter into, possess, and enjoy the mysteries of this Infinite Person, God manifest in the flesh?

But, again, one more representation, and I will pass on to the next, and that is that he has established peace; and that in a way just suited to us. "Wherefore," says the apostle, "it behooved him," according to his covenant standing, according to prediction; whatever the Scriptures required of him he did; and when the Scriptures required that precious, precious life, he never withheld it, but yielded it up. So "it behooved him," says the apostle; it was predicted concerning him; predicted by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, by the appointment of the Father, and by this Divine word himself going forth in the same counsels from everlasting; on these grounds "it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren;" that is in all things essential to their welfare. "His brethren;" again you see relationship; the apostle is so enamored with this, he does not lose sight of it all through the Epistle; and I could prove it, but I will not stop to do so now; it would be a sermon by itself. "That he might be a merciful;" Ah, there it is again; what should we do without a merciful Priest? Not like our Parsons some of them, who say, yes, I hold election; and I hold Christ's perfection; and I hold the covenant of grace. Oh, do you? Who do you hold it for? Not for the people, for you

hardly ever preach it to them; not for yourself, for you hardly ever talk about it; if your heart were full, you could not keep it to yourself; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Who do you hold it for then? You keep it for the devil, sir; that is, you keep it quiet, and that is the devil and you together trying to neutralize God's blessed truth. Not so with Jesus. Would Jesus withhold one mercy from his brethren the Father had put into his hands for them? Would he withhold one promise, would he withhold one word? No, "The words you gave me I have given unto them." Whatever grace and mercy are treasured up in me for my brethren, I will not be backwards; I will minister them all to them. "Freely," said he to his own ministers, and he says the same now, "you have received, and freely give." "That he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest;" faithful to all things written concerning him, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." There I will stop and say he has established peace.

Now then, what think you of this Jesus Christ? He has taken away the contrast to which I referred in the first part of my discourse; he has put his own eternal perfection into the place of that contrast, and brought about conformity between us and himself, and if there be conformity between us and himself, then there is conformity between us and God, for Christ is the image of God; he has taken away our old Adam and law relationship, and has put an eternal relationship to himself in the place thereof; he has taken away all our bondage, and put the freedom his blood has brought into the place thereof; he has taken away all our sins, made reconciliation for sin, and is put peace into the place thereof, so that we have peace while we live, and peace when we die, and peace forever. "Mark the perfect man," the man perfect in Christ, "and behold the upright," the upright man in the faith, "for the end of that man is peace," by Jesus Christ having made reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Now *the last days*. I meant to have a word upon the sonship this morning, and I think I will not meddle with the last days this morning but will have a word about the sonship of Christ in the way of conclusion. The first is, be careful that you do not put the divinity of Jesus Christ into the place of his manhood, you thereby all but ignore and despise his manhood. Let us be careful then, that we do not do this. We live in a day when it is death almost not to believe the sonship of Christ lies in his Deity. I will give you their definition of it. *The definition of the most learned of that class is, that Jesus Christ as God was not begotten as to his essence; so that according to that he was originally and essentially everything that the Father is, and everything that the Holy Spirit is; but while he was not begotten as God, yet God the Father begat the sonship of Christ in his Deity: that is, turned his divine essence into a Son; so that it underwent a change, they do not admit this, but that doctrine unavoidably involves this, and that this Person who was originally equal with the Father, is by an act of Divine power brought into subordinate character, turned from being essentially God, to be that Son of God. That is their definition; and on this ground they say that in his deity he is the eternal son of God¹.* Well, in the first place there is in such a definition the vilest, I was going to say, absurdity that can ever enter the mind of man, it is a definition that would do well to form a part of the fables of the generation of gods among the heathen; but the idea of an Infinite Person undergoing a change from that infinity to something else; a self-existent Person undergoing a change from that self-existence to something else: and omnipotent Person undergoing a change from that omnipotence to something else, a Person who is by nature everything that the Father and the Holy Ghost are, for all through the Old Testament Christ is again, again, and again in all the covenant relations he bears, called Jehovah, and yet we are to

¹ My emphasis here and below. RCS

receive their heathen doctrine of Christ's divinity undergoing a degeneration in order for him to become something subordinate; if this be not casting down the Deity of Christ from his excellency, then I know not what is. There is not in all the Bible one scripture that calls him the Son of God apart from his complexity. Such persons ignore the manhood of Christ; they lower the manhood of Christ, they insult the manhood of Christ, they degrade the manhood of Christ, they all but despise the manhood of Christ, I thus publicly charge them with it, and it shall go forth in print. Let us come to the holy scriptures, what did they say? "That holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." Oh no, they say, that is a mistake, his sonship lies in the change that his eternal deity underwent, but not one scripture in the word of God calls him the Son of God apart from his complexity. Let us look, in conclusion, this morning at the honors, and with that one idea I will close my discourse, must torment you a little more upon the subject yet, the other party have become rampart, writing private letters and doing all sorts of things to try to carry their point; but while I live I will never cease to bear testimony against that that degrades the Savior: let us look then in conclusion at the honors, and I can give you only a very small sample, which the word of God puts upon the manhood of Christ. One scripture I have quoted, "that holy thing which shall be born of you, shall be called the Son of God." There is the Sonship in his manhood, but not apart from his complexity, because his manhood never existed without his deity. I come to the river Jordan he that was baptized was God, but that which was baptized was the Son of God; into that which came up out of the water the Father said, "This is my beloved Son." Did John baptize infinite Deity, or was it the manhood of Christ that John baptized, which? Because whichever John baptized, God called his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. And what was it transfigured before the disciples? Was it infinite Deity? Or was it his manhood? Because whatever was transfigured, of that which was transfigured the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Who was it standing at Jerusalem, and just about to lay down his life; who was it? Was it infinite Deity? I know that his life was the work of God; he that lived for me was God, and he that died for me was God, but that which died was man, he who died was God, that which rose from the dead was man, but he who rose from the dead was God, because he was one person, distinct, but not separate, the natures. So, when he said "Father, glorify your Son," then came a voice, who was it addressed to? Why, Jesus Christ as man.

Then, again, who was it died on the cross; was it infinite Deity? I know the work was the work of a complex Person; he that died was God, that which died was man. "Truly", said one, "this was a righteous man." Now notice the other expression, "Truly this was the Son of God." Of what did the centurion thus exclaim, but of the man Christ Jesus? Ah, the Scriptures honor his manhood. And I could show you from the book of Daniel how careful the Holy Ghost has been upon this matter to honor Christ's manhood, as though he should say, While you admit, and it is essential to your welfare that you should admit the absolute Godhead of Christ, do not let his Deity take the place of his manhood. Hence Daniel in the seventh chapter says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man come with the clouds of heaven:" the honor put upon this man; he has committed all judgment unto the Son, because he is that Son of man; and as the Son of God he is exalted at God's right hand, and will be subject to the Father forever to carry out his will. *He is never once in his Deity called the Son of God. But they lay great stress upon the fact that Nebuchadnezzar saw four men walking loose, notice that: men. Now in order for that to be the Son of God, according to these eternal generationists, he ought to have seen infinite Deity. Well, but "the fourth is like the Son of God." Our English Bible is but a translation. Dr. Hales, and all the best Hebrews scholars, read that as they read the words of the magicians before Moses, "This is*

the finger of a God.” Now Dr. Hales, an Arminian from top to toe, reads it in this way, “like the Son of a god.”