

PREPARATION FOR DEATH AND GLORY

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning November 23rd, 1862

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At the Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 4 Number 205

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Colossians 1:12

A SAINT in light is a man that loves the light of the gospel; his eyes are opened, and he is turned from darkness into the light of the gospel, and in that gospel, he finds victory over Satan, in that gospel he finds forgiveness of sin. The man who is thus brought into the light of the gospel, and loves that light, is in contrast to the state in which he once was, in which he hated that light, for he that does evil hates the light, and therefore avoids the light; but he who is in harmony with the truth, and is blessed with faith in Jesus Christ, and walks in that life of faith with Christ, this man comes to the light, that his deeds might be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

A saint in light is a believer in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the light; therefore, a saint in light is a saint in Christ. A saint in light is a saint, or a believer, in God the Father. You read of the church which is in our Father. A saint in light is also a saint in the Holy Ghost. In a word, a saint in light is a man that is a believer in God and brought into an acquaintance with God in that relation meant, by the apostle John when he says that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” And if we walk in the “light,” which, of course, is there gospel light meant, “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.” First, then, a saint in light is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And their being in light implies that they are brought out of darkness. Then what is the Jesus Christ in which they believe? What is it to be, in this light, and to be a lover of the light? To be in the light and to be a lover of the light is to be prepared for eternity. Now, first, it is to be in the light of Christ’s salvation; second, it is to be in the light of his covenant; third, it is to be in the light of that inheritance which he has established; fourth, it is to be in the light of eternal blessedness. These are set forth in the 49th of Isaiah, where the dear Savior appears in that delightful character of a Savior. The Lord, God the Father, there says unto Christ, “In an acceptable time have I heard you;” and that acceptable time, of course, was the life and death of Jesus Christ; that was the time that God appointed, and that was the time that the law was magnified; and that was the time that sin was atoned for, and that was the time that the penalty was endured and put away; and that was the time when mercy and truth met together; that was the time when righteousness and peace kissed each other; that was the time when angels looked on and wondered, and all the angels of God worshipped him; that was the time when death was swallowed up in victory; that was the time when Satan was cast down to rise no more. Dominion over us he had in the first Adam, but

dominion over us in the second Adam he cannot have. "In an acceptable time." Ah! that is the time that God accepted. And bless the Lord! he has made that time worthy, in our estimation, of all acceptation, including in that blissful time the delightful truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. "In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you." God the Father helped Christ at the river Jordan when he testified there of him. God the Father helped Christ in the Mount of Transfiguration when he again testified of him. God the Father helped Christ a few days before his wondrous death, when at Jerusalem, for the third time, he again testified of him. But I must not stop to comment upon these mere relative points to this matter. Now to be brought into the light is to be brought into the light of salvation; that "in a day of salvation have I helped you." I trust we are brought then into the light of this salvation; that that was the accepted time, that was the time when the work I have indicated was done; that was the time when Jesus accomplished the warfare, when pardon was established, and when the double was brought in, grace now and glory hereafter. We are brought into this light, and we love this light; this salvation which he has wrought is our hope, we take our stand there; and that salvation is, to us, indeed as a lamp that burns, as a light that shines in a dark place. And then they shall be brought, not only into the light of salvation, but into the light of his covenant. "I will preserve you." Ah! see through his infancy how he was preserved. And remember, his preservation was our preservation. Could anything have befallen him in his infancy to defile or to destroy, we should thereby have been destroyed. So that his preservation was our preservation; so, in the grave, again, could he have seen corruption, we never could have been delivered from corruption; but even in the grave he saw no corruption. See how he was preserved, "Not a bone of him shall be broken;" "I will preserve you and give you for a covenant of the people." There it is, "a covenant of the people." He is called the covenant because he is the essence of it. The covenant is God's good, and acceptable, and perfect will concerning that eternal mercy which he has for poor sinners, and the Lord Jesus Christ came to do that goodwill, and the goodness of the work which he has done shows the goodness of the will. He came to do that acceptable will. That will was made acceptable to Christ; he delighted in God's good will. And the Lord makes that will acceptable unto his people, being willing to show unto them the immutability of the counsel of that will. And so, the perfection of Christ's work shows the perfection of the will. Here, then, is a good work, that shows a good will; and here is an acceptable work, that shows the acceptable will; and here is a perfect work, that shows the perfection of the will. "I will give you for a covenant of the people." So that this is a covenant matter, that which God has positively, independent of all creature conditions, undertaken to achieve, and he has done so. And this, again, is another ray of light. It is the light of salvation, and the light of this everlasting covenant of which Jesus Christ is the Mediator, and which he has sealed with his own blood.

Now again, "To establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." This will bring in here the subject of our text. "To establish the earth." What earth? Not the Jewish earth certainly, for that was overturned all but simultaneously with the establishment of the earth that he came to establish. Not this earth certainly, though there is a sense, I am aware, in which he established the continuation of this earth, but I apprehend that is not the thing there intended. "To establish the earth;" that is, establish the promised land. And what is the promised land? Why, a land of eternal life; a land of eternal plenty; a land flowing with milk and honey, in the heavenly, and immortal, and spiritual sense of the word. The earth, therefore, that he has established is the new earth, that new state of things, and he has established that. "To cause to inherit the desolate heritages." Ah, there is election; it is a nice heritage, but it is lying desolate; and the Lord calls Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob, and one after another, and then, at the day of Pentecost, a great multitude he causes to inherit election. And then there is predestination lying quite desolate and solitary; but the Lord calls poor sinners, and they find their way into it, and there they dwell; there they find rivers of water, and plenty of all good things. Some people can find nothing in election or predestination, except to find fault with it; whereas those who are taught of God are brought into these heritages. And there lies the mediatorial, the substitutional work of Christ quite desolate. Hence, when the Savior came into the world, amidst all the gospels of the day, there was not one, except among very few, that set forth his substitutional work, so that they knew him not when he came. That was a kind of desolate heritage, and the Lord calls poor sinners, and now that part of the heritage is inherited by thousands. And then, again, there are faith, judgment, and mercy. These vitalities were passed over by the Pharisees, left desolate, as it were, but now the Lord has, from the day of Pentecost down to the present time, brought one after another to inherit these desolate heritages. It is, therefore, the light of salvation. If I am brought to love God's salvation, then I am prepared for eternity. It is the light of an everlasting covenant; if I am brought into that light, and love that light, and love God in that light, I am prepared to be a partaker of this inheritance; and if I am brought into this new earth, this kingdom of Christ, and these truths expressive of our heritages that lie desolate, and brought to live where very few people live, for you meet with very few that dwell in these truths, then I am prepared for eternity. Now, to render this matter clear, let me just run back for a moment. First, can that man enjoy God's eternal salvation that neither feels his need of it, nor is brought to receive it? Is he capable of ascribing that kind of salvation to God of which God is the author? No; he is not made meet to do so. Why not? Why, he is blind to his condition as a sinner, he is blind to God's salvation, and, therefore, he is not prepared to go to heaven, and join with the saints in sounding out to eternity an eternal salvation; he does not believe it, he is not prepared; he hates it, he hates the truth; he calls it hyperism, Antinomianism, and thus belches out the demoniacal enmity of his heart, and yet piques himself upon his own supposed fleshly piety, that he is prepared for heaven, when, at the same time, his heart is at war with the real character of God's salvation. Is that man prepared for heaven, to sing of God's immutability, and to dwell with infinite pleasure in the bond of an indissoluble covenant, that hates the covenant, that says, Away with a covenant ordered in all things and sure; or, at least, if he does not absolutely say it, he does not understand it, blindly hates it, and yet thinks he shall go to heaven? Why, that man is not prepared to sing of a covenanted God; he is not prepared to bear testimony of this eternal covenant, and, therefore, not prepared for heaven. You must be brought into this light, and into love to God in this salvation, and in this covenant; and if you are not prepared now to join with the saints in this salvation, and in this eternal covenant, then you are not prepared for heaven, for the song on earth and the song in heaven is one and the same; it is sung better there than it is here, no doubt, but not more sincerely.

“More happy but not more sincere,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

I say, not more sincerely. Have not men undergone tortures indescribable, and willingly shed the last drop of their blood rather than give up one particle of the truth that sets before them God as their eternal salvation, and this eternal covenant? Giving thanks to the Father that has thus brought us into the light of salvation, into the light of this covenant, and made us love him with all our souls in this order of things. And herein lies the preparation. Why, perhaps some few of you, you join in the hymns sometimes, but you don't understand them. I am not speaking unkindly, but you

know you don't understand them. You are not prepared for heaven; you cannot sing of the salvation of God as that which you feel your need of, as that which is your solemn hope for time and eternity; you cannot sing of a covenant ordered in all things and sure as that which dwells in your inmost soul, and which you embrace with all your might, and at times bless God for, and wish you had more power to bless him for such a revelation of this stupendous love and eternal mercy. Now, notice, the Savior was thus to appear as a Savior, and as the Mediator of the covenant, and to bring us into eternal rest. Here I am brought to my text, "That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth: to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." Oh, what a beautiful representation! First, here is a salvation for them; second, here is a covenant sealed for them, in which the blessed God stands engaged for their eternal welfare; third, here is the new earth and glorious heritages waiting for them; and when you have done all this, then "that you may say to the prisoners, Go forth." Jesus Christ would be ashamed to say to a poor sinner, Go forth to a salvation that cannot save you. He would be ashamed; he would reckon it infinitely beneath his dignity to say to a poor prisoner, Go forth to a covenant that is ordered only in some things, and therefore not sure in anything. He would reckon it infinitely beneath his dignity to say to a poor sinner, Go forth into an inheritance that you may possess today and lose tomorrow. Oh, no! The Lord here says, "Go forth; show yourselves." Well, but, Lord, why show myself? I can appear only as a leper. Never mind; here is the cleansing blood for you. Well, but, Lord, if I show myself, I am clothed with filthy garments. Oh, I will change your raiment for you. Lord, if I show myself, I show myself a poor guilty wretch, deserving the lowest hell. But I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions. Show yourself, confess it all, tell me what a poor creature you are; confess your transgressions; confess your depravity; confess your weakness; show yourself. And then, when you have shown yourself by confession, opened your heart, and told me what you are, I will then show what I have for you; I will put an end to the whole. And the more this is revealed, the more this which he has for us is revealed, the more such will love the Lord. "That you may say to the prisoners, Go forth." Well, but, Lord, how can I go forth? I am afraid to go forth towards God, a holy God, a righteous God, a just Judge, inflexible justice, insulted holiness, and hated truth; for I once hated your truth. I am afraid to go: how can I go? Hear the voice of God the Father testify, "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Ah, Lord! if that is the way the prisoner is released, by the blood of the covenant there is hope for me. If that is the way I am to see the face of holiness, and justice, and truth, the face of infinite Majesty itself, then there is hope for me, if it is thus by the blood of the everlasting covenant. "Turn you to the stronghold", and what can be a stronger hold than the atonement of Jesus Christ? what can be a stronger hold than the atonement which he has made? "turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope; even today do I declare that I will render double unto you" grace now, and glory hereafter. "Whom he justifies, them he glorifies." "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." That is, the saint in light, the light of salvation, the light of covenant confirmation, the light of a new covenant inheritance, and the light of eternal plenty. Mark the next words in Isaiah 49th, "They shall feed in the ways." And is it not so? Get a crumb now and then, a little pasture now and then, a little fruit from the tree of life now and then. "And their pastures shall be in all high places," they shall not be in the low, boggy ground of human devices. Go down to your paper prayers, and down to your ceremonies, and down to your Popery, as long as you like, let me soar away into the mountains of eternal love, into the mountains of eternal mercy and salvation; and there the pastures are to be. And now, notice, "They shall not hunger, nor thirst", for the land into which they are brought is such a land of plenty, a river that will never cease to

flow, where the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the sower of seed him that treads grapes; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt; such a succession of the rotation of crops, that they shall know nothing of famine, their garners shall be full, "they shall not hunger nor thirst", the bread of eternal life, the water of eternal life, "neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he that has mercy on them shall lead them", not *drive* them, but *lead* them, "even by the springs of water shall he guide them." Now, then, to be prepared for heaven, is to be prepared to give a truthful testimony of God's salvation; to be prepared for heaven is to be prepared to give a truthful testimony of a covenant ordered in all things and sure; to be prepared for heaven is to be prepared to give a truthful testimony of the inheritance he has for us, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, kept by the power of God; to be prepared for heaven is to be brought into this light; is thus to be cleansed by the blood of the everlasting covenant, reconciled to God, brought to love the light, to glory in the light, to walk in the light, to live in the light; and such shall die in the light, rise in the light; and the Lord shall be unto them, in this order of things, an everlasting light; their God their glory, and the days of their mourning shall be ended.

We live in a day when there is a certain class of professors, not few in number, who will admit all these doctrines that I have advanced; but then, say they, these doctrines, by themselves, are rather too strong for your poor eyes, rather dangerous by themselves; and so they kindle a nice little duty-faith fire, and that will bring some clouds over these dreadfully bright, burning doctrines, and then your poor eyes will not be hurt so much, be able to look more comfortably; and you can walk then, not in the light of these glaring doctrines, but in the pious sparks that you have kindled. Ah, that's it; that's what we like our minister for; he does preach the same doctrines as the *hypers* but then he kindles a nice little duty-faith fire, and tells the sinner that it is his duty savingly to believe, and he does somewhat put the Holy Ghost aside, and put the creature somewhat into his place; kindles this fire, up goes the smoke, and then your poor eyes can bear the light a little better; but when the light comes, without this duty-faith cloud between, it is too much for our eyes. But I should think, such are owls' eyes; the eagle's eyes love a cloudless sun, and the soul that is taught of God is never so enraptured as when it can, in cloudless light, behold the glories of the blest Redeemer, and sing with Watts,

"The more Your glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall be,"

melts down the soul and enraptures the mind. In olden times there was strange fire offered, and the apostle speaks of strange doctrine, and the new covenant knows nothing of the duty-faith doctrine, the new covenant knows nothing of free-will doctrine. Well, but they ought to be rewarded for their piety. So, they will; so, it is written, "This shall you have of my hand, says the "Lord; you shall lie down in sorrow." Whereas the poor sinner, that feels his need of the grace of God as manifested in that new covenant order of things to which I have referred, and loves the light, and hates the darkness, he hates this strange fire; he says, Away with it; it is from hell; and its smoke is intended by the devil to obscure the gospel and delude men. Let me have the light without darkness, Christ without anything mixed up with him; let me have God in covenant, step out of the law into the gospel, out of death into life, and out of everything that is of a creature kind, into that which is eternal.

Thus, then, I have described to you so far, the saint in light; and if you are not brought into this light you are not prepared for heaven. This is the light of heaven. What is the light of heaven? Jesus Christ; God in Christ, and Christ in God; God in the gospel, and the gospel in God. That is the light of heaven. Says John, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb," the sacrificial Lamb, the spotless, meek, and the lowly Lamb, and the Lamb "is the light thereof." Ah, say you, that is a light I can bear. So, can I, my hearer. I glory with all the powers of my soul in the light of sacrificial perfection, and can say, and so can hundreds of you too, bless the God of mercy for it! can say with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, then, a saint in light is a believer in Christ. Secondly, a saint in light is a believer in God the Father. "The church which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." You must not only be in Christ, but in God the Father. First you must be in God the Father's love, in the eternity of it; loved you with an everlasting love; you must receive the testimony of it, understand it, and that testimony of the love of God must endear God the Father to you. Secondly, you must be in the choice of God the Father; you must be brought into his electing grace. Ah, says one, I don't believe in that electing grace. Then you are not prepared for heaven; for how can you sing of electing grace, how can you? You don't believe it. Ah, you think you shall go to heaven; oh, then, look well to it, for I solemnly think you are deceiving yourself; because, if you are not brought into a knowledge of electing grace, and love to it, how can you join with the saints of God saying, "We are bound to give thanks unto God, that has from the beginning chosen you to salvation"? How can you join in the song, if you are not brought to feel indebted to electing grace for any hope you may have, that your worthless name is inscribed in the book of life above? A saint in light, then, is a man that is brought into electing grace, and into the gratitude of it, as our text indicates, giving thanks unto the Father, who by loving us, and choosing us, and laying our sins upon Christ, and imputing his work to us, did, in eternal counsel, prepare us for eternal glory. You must be in the gift of God the Father; I have already noticed that Christ is God's gift; and you must also be in the provision of God the Father. He has made all that provision in Christ, for in him dwells all fulness, that shall meet every possible necessity. Let the guilt be as great as it may, his grace shall cover it; let the bruises and putrefying sores be as universal as they may, of however long standing, however deeply seated, and however deadly their kind, he is infinitely more able to heal than sin is to wound, to save, than sin is to destroy. A saint in light, then, is a man that thus stands in Christ, and in God the Father. And he loves God the Father. It was God the Father Chose him, it was God the Father gave him to his dear Son, it was God the father that made this provision; and the dear Savior appears and has carried it out.

Third and last, a saint in light is a man that is in the Holy Ghost; a man that is taken by the Holy Spirit, taken into the Holy Spirit's power, taken into the Holy Spirit's hands. There is a threefold sense I may notice. I will confine my present remarks to the threefold sense in which the Christian is taken into the hands and power of the Holy Ghost. First, so as to pray in the Holy Ghost, praying in the Holy Ghost. How do I know I am praying in the Holy Ghost? Why, by the nature of the prayer. Let us hear the apostle carry it out. "Praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God;" that is, you yourselves keep in God's love; cleave to that; do not disbelieve in the eternity of his love. If you once disbelieve either the eternity or immutability of his love, then you will look round for something else to make up the deficiency. So that one sign of your praying in the Holy Ghost, is that you will keep in the testimony of the eternity and immutability of the love of God; you will neither be a free-willier nor a duty-faith man. Then what you are looking for, and the way in which you look for it, is another sign that you are praying, not from nature, but in the Holy

Ghost. What you are looking for, and the way you look for it, and the end you look to. "Looking," what for? "For the mercy." Ah, that's it, the mercy. If you are praying in the Holy Ghost, you will not be like the Pharisee, thanking God that you are not as other men, but you will be like the publican, looking for mercy, praying for mercy.

"Is not your mercy rich and free;
May not a sinner trust in you?"

That is sign the second of praying in the Holy Ghost; then the way in which you look for it. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that you will look for that mercy exclusively by the worth and worthiness of Jesus Christ. Anything you do entitle you to the mercy! You will scorn the thought. Anything that you can bring entitle you to the approbation of mercy! You will disdain the thought, and cleave to the blessed truth, that while we were yet sinners, God commended his love unto us. And if he met us at the first merely as sinners, he meets us as such now, apart from his grace considered. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." And then the end will be another sign that you are praying in the Holy Ghost "unto eternal life." That is the man that prays in the Holy Ghost then; the man that sees the love of God is eternal and immutable and keeps in that; the man that looks with earnest eyes and heart from day to day for the mercy of God, and is daily more or less, if not in words, in substance, saying, "It is of the Lord's mercy that I am not consumed." And then it is not vague mercy, or mercy in a vague, loose, undefined way; but mediatorial, new covenant mercy, "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" "unto eternal life." What can be more sublime? A life of eternity, endless life, endless peace, endless plenty, endless glory; for the word *life* there includes everything that pertains thereto. Thus, then, a saint in light is a man that prays in the Holy Ghost, thus keeping in the truth of God's eternal love, looking for mercy by Jesus Christ, to the great end, eternal life. Second, a saint in light not only prays in the Holy Ghost, but he loves God by the power of the Holy Ghost. Fifth of the Romans: "Hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." You will say, How does the Holy Ghost do it? I will tell you; I will explain to you how the Holy Ghost, so far, at least, as is necessary for our understanding, how the Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in the heart. He does it in this way; he gives you to see and feel that you deserve the direful but righteous wrath of God; he gives you to see that you are by nature a child of wrath, even as others; he then reveals to you the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the work of Jesus Christ; he leads you to believe in Jesus Christ; and by that justification from all things which Christ has brought in, the Holy Ghost brings you into the enjoyment of peace with God and that peace with God fills your heart with love to God. "She loves much, because much is forgiven." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And then the apostle goes on to show what tribulation like exercises will do in establishing us in these things. He says that this hope which we have, this "hope makes not ashamed" because, by these truths, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts;" and it is only when it is shed abroad that we enjoy it. Hence, if a minister be led so to speak that the word is attended with power, and the love of God overflows, as it were, the banks of all that is carnal, and raises the soul into sacred love to God, and enables such a one to say, Well, if the Lord were now to say to me, "Love you me?" I could say, "Yes, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." I see how my sins are gone, I see how mercy reigns, how grace reigns, how I shall be a king and a priest forever. A saint in light, then, is a man that prays in the Holy Ghost, a man that loves God in this order of eternal

justification before God by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But lastly, a saint in light is a man that stands in the revelation of the Holy Ghost. There was a just man, just by faith in Christ; and the result was he was devout, he was devoted to God; “and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” I have no doubt he had seen a great many Christs, but none of them did for him. I saw a Church of England Christ, didn’t do for me. I saw a free-will Christ, didn’t do for me. I saw a duty-faith Christ, didn’t do for me. But the Holy Ghost said he should not see death before he had seen *the Lord’s Christ*. “And he came by the Spirit into the temple,” and there was the Lord’s Christ. And the Holy Ghost revealed to Simeon what kind of a Christ it was; he saw it was a Christ that had put away sin, swallowed up death in victory, opened the way to heaven, everything was clear and settled. “Ah!” said Simeon, “now I have seen the Lord’s Christ. Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace, according to your word.” Ah! how different the Lord’s Christ from the Christs that are made by men and offered by men. “Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.” Your salvation! That is a saint in light. He was in the light now, in the light of God’s eternal salvation. Well, Simeon, do you think anyone else besides yourself will be so pleased with this salvation? Well, he says, I do. Perhaps you are rather higher in doctrine than some of the rest will be, Simeon. Not at all, for it is “a light.” What, this eternal salvation? Yes, “a light to lighten the Gentiles;” and it has done so, and it does do so, and it will do so; “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” Gentiles become Israel; the transit from heathenism to vital godliness; they pass out of their heathen state, cease to be Gentiles, become Christians. “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

Well, now, I have not time to say a word about the thanks; but I will tell you how that deficiency can be made up; it is our collection-day, and you can give a thorough good thank-offering as you pass the plates.