

MICHAEL THE GREAT PRINCE

A SERMON

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“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of your people.” Daniel 12:1

OF all the myriads of angels that surround the throne of God, there are only two that are known by name, namely, Gabriel and Michael. These two appear to me to be literally angels. Gabriel signifies the strength of God, and Michael signifies the likeness or image of God. And you will perceive that the words Gabriel and Michael both terminate with the Hebrew word *el*, which, according to Parkhurst, means an interposer; a term by which the Savior is some thousands of times in the Hebrew Scriptures distinguished. And therefore, the two names of those two angels evidently have reference to Christ, because their offices have reference to Christ. See the tidings of Gabriel in the 9th of Daniel and see the tidings of Gabriel when he came to the Virgin Mary; and see Michael when he disputed with the devil over the body of Moses. So that those angels, their very names, bore reference to the character of Christ. Now then, Jesus Christ is the strength of God, or the power of God; and Jesus Christ is the image of God, or the likeness of God. I, therefore, without farther remark by way of introduction, conclude that the Michael here spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the time here referred to is, first, the time of his humiliation; and then, secondly, that eternal time into which at his resurrection he entered; for when Christ rose from the dead, he entered into eternal time; he dies no more, death has no more dominion over him. So, “at that time.” The term *time*, therefore, in our text will mean from the time that the Savior was born to all eternity. “Ever is his time.” I am fully aware that there are people that tell us that our text belongs to some future age, to something that they call a millennium on earth, and so they say this text ought to be saved till this time; and they turn round and blame some of us for making it apply to things past, and represent us as believing that this text has reference only to things that are past, and has no reference at all to things that are future. But then they are wrong in that. Why, because the sun has been shining ever since the foundation of the world, we do not deny that it shines still, and we do not deny that it will shine down to the end of time. And so our text, it has reference to the past, and to the present, and to the future; and the words of John will apply here, “He which was, which is, and which is to come.” Let us have through it all one Lord Jesus Christ, whether we go back into antiquity, or whether we come to the present, or whether we come to the future; let us still abide in the light of this same sun, and then we shall see our way back into eternity past; we shall see our way all through time; we shall see our way through all our

circumstances; we shall see our way through Jordan: we shall see our way to heaven, and we shall see where we are when we are there. Jesus Christ is that true light. But how shall I crowd into a small space the very, very many things that present themselves in the language of our text?

I will notice, then, first, *the Savior appearing as our defense*. "At that time shall Michael stand up." And then, secondly, *the fourfold sense in which he stands for the people*.

First, then, we notice the Savior as *the defense of his people*; that he took a certain stand on their behalf. Let us try and trace this out, and see what we can find in it for our own souls this morning, and see if we can get any present good from it, as well as a hope of future good; because our religion, if it be of the right kind, is a religion now, and a religion near. I will take some verses from the 50th of Isaiah to help me out with this matter of Christ standing up for his people. The Savior there said, "The Lord God has opened me ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." There was a dreadful scene before him, and yet he did not turn back from it. And there were several reasons why he did not turn back. First, because it was the will of God that he should perform the work he came into the world to perform. And Christ delighted in that will. Whatever the will of God was, that was Christ's delight. That was one reason why he would not turn back; he came to do God's will, and by that will he abode. "And this is the will," said the Savior, "of him that sent me, that of all that he has given me I should lose nothing but raise it up at the last day." Had he turned back this good will of God would not have been carried out. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that sees the Son," sees him in this position as standing up for a poor sinner, "may have everlasting life, and will raise him up at the last day." Therefore, it is that he did not turn back, but abode by the will of God. And the second reason that he did not turn back was because of his love to the people; for, notwithstanding the many waters that were before him, the many waters could not quench love, neither could the floods drown it. He was, therefore, determined to travel on till he reached the objects of his love; he was determined to travel on till he had obtained the eternal redemption of the objects of his love; he was determined to travel on until he had reached the gloomy regions into which sin and Satan had brought the objects of his love, nor to stay until he had reached them, and wrought out for them that perfection in which he shall present them. This is another reason that he did not turn back but stood first for his people. And we shall see presently how beautifully the Scriptures handle this subject as the ground of confidence unto our souls. And another reason that he did not turn back was because the great end to be answered was so well worth his while to suffer for. Hence, "for the joy set before him he endured the cross and despised the shame." There he is, there he is now in actual possession of that joy; there he is now, satisfied with the travail of his soul, there he is now, comforted on every side; there he is now, with his hand on the neck of all his enemies; there he is now, reigning in infinite ease and infinite majesty. Here is an eternity of blessedness, that he thought worth his while to travel on to reach. And another reason why he did not turn back was because none could turn him back. Our sin could not turn him back; the curse could not turn him back; Satan could not turn him back; the world could not turn him back; death could not turn him back; nor could delusions or errors in any way bewilder his luminous, his perfectly luminous mind so as to lead him astray, entangle him, and so compel him to turn back. There was no power that could cause him to turn back. So that he stood up; he stood up, says our text, and he could not be thrown down. Thus, then, because of the will of God, and because of his personal love, and because of the joy set before him, and because there was no power to equal him, he therefore turned not back, "Yes," he says, "I gave my back to the smiters," and awful indeed was the conduct of those that smote

him “and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.” I have shuddered sometimes when I read the New Testament and read the awful way in which they treated the Son of God. And, says the evangelist Luke, very significantly, “And many other things blasphemously spoke they against him.” Oh, we feel it was blasphemous, we feel it was demoniacal enmity, we feel and see what an awful thing sin is, to set a poor, besotted worm of the earth at war with the only way in which that sinner can escape the wrath to come. Yet we must not forget that we are not better than they. No; we were all by nature bad as they were, and the same grace that saved some of them, the same grace saves us. So that the apostle’s two questions can never be understood, not rightly, only in the sense he intended them to be understood, when he said, “Who makes you to differ? “Gladly do we acknowledge that it is the Lord that has made us to differ from our former state, and to differ from others. “And what have you that you have not received?” We gladly acknowledge that we have nothing good, nothing pleasing in the sight of God, but that which is in Christ. And when God gave Christ, he gave everything, and to receive Jesus Christ is to receive everything, “for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” Let us hear the Savior, when the Savior stood thus with the will of God, in this love to the people, and with this prospect before him of all he had to encounter, let us hear the language of his decision. He says, “For the Lord God will help me; therefore, shall I not be confounded.” Oh, how true this is! How did they watch to catch something out of his mouth that they might confound him! But they never could, they never did, and they never will. Satan would fain persuade us, that when we are confounded, as we sometimes are, at least I am, all is over with us. So, it would be if Jesus were confounded. And Satan would fain persuade us, that when we know not what to do, it is all over with us; and so it would be if Jesus did not himself know what he would do, it would be over with us. But as long as there is One never was, never can, and never will be confounded, we shall never be confounded ultimately until he is confounded. “Therefore,” he says, “have I set my face like a flint.” He knew, if he once compromised principle, once softened matters down, once ran away from baptism to please the world, ran away from the ordinance to please the world, ran away from some of the truths of the gospel, or softened them down, or mixed up something with them the world would like, he well knew if he did this, all would be over. Once admit one grain of Satanic falsehood intermixed with pure truth, all would have been lost, all would have been undone. But he set his face like a flint, he abode by the truth of God, and his ministry, like Aaron’s rod, swallowed up all the rods of the magicians. The dear Savior stood fast, made the Scriptures his guide throughout, and spoke, and lived, and died, and rose, and reigns, just as it was written of him; never deviated one iota from that that he came to do. “Therefore, have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” And so must we do if we wish to prosper, if we wish to be like him, if we wish to be congratulated at the last, “Well done, you good and faithful servant;” if we wish to please God, if we wish to get to heaven, if we wish to be useful to others, if we wish to glorify God, we must set our faces like a flint, that is, we must stand fast in a solemn and immovable decision for the truth as it is in Jesus. “For the Lord God will help me.” I will have a word upon that presently. The Savior then looks about, and he sees the adversary and the Savior knew at the same time that God the Father was with him. “You shall leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.” So, “He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together: who is my adversary? let him come near to me.” Well, says the devil, so I will, then; I will come near. I know it is written that the great prince, that Michael, shall stand up; but I will try and throw him down. So, he took him to the pinnacle of the temple. “If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down.” Ah, Satan, wilt you prevail? Eh, no; eh, no. Ah, but then here are all the kingdoms of the world. Well, but then see how bad off you are; command these stones to he made bread. No; Satan is defeated;

the Savior must stand up, cannot throw him down, he cannot stumble, there is no power can make him stumble. Why, you and I, though we are too proud to own it, stumble every day at something or another. But the Savior never stumbled; he stood upon holy ground, stood fast, and not anything could throw him down. Again, "Who is he that shall condemn me?" Why, he says, "Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up." How true that is! See the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation waxed old like a garment, and the moth has eaten them up, and they will be a nation again no more forever. The Jewish nation restored! No more than Babylon will be restored: because the Jewish nation became a part of the mystic Babylon, and never will be restored. See how true it is that nation that condemned him came to nothing, as every sinner must that lives and dies in antipathy to Christ. Well, now, here is a Person then that stands up in defense of poor sinners, for their eternal salvation, as the way in which God is to stand by the people. Christ standing by the people is only expressive of God's standing by the people by him. Whatever Christ's standing was for us, that God's standing for us is. Whatever Christ's position was that is the position of our God for us. Hence let us see what kind of experience we have connected with this. "Who is there among you that fears Jehovah?" Do not be afraid to read it that way; the original word is Jehovah. There is God in his absolute eternity, in contrast to false gods. And is not the eternity of the gospel one of its peculiar characteristics? But if Arminianism or duty-faithism be true, then the gospel is not eternal, but floating about upon uncertainties. They tell us that thousands are in hell for whom Christ died, that the gospel is not eternal, and such like things they tell us; but, thank the Lord, the Scriptures do not tell us so. It is one, then, of the distinctive features of the gospel that it is the everlasting gospel. And so, "Who is there among you that fears Jehovah?" And to show that this bears reference to the eternity of God, the next words are, "and obeys the voice of his servant." Now, what is the voice of Christ? Why, the voice of substitution; and your obedience must be the obedience of faith, to believe in him as thus standing up for the salvation of a sinner. What is this voice? Why, the voice of victory. There the enemy is overcome. And the Lord God helped Christ, by approving of him. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Three times the Lord said that to Christ in the days of his humiliation, and God's approbation was God's help. Just so now, if you have God's approving presence, that is his help. Whether in providence, whether in grace, whether in life, whether in death, have God's approving presence, then mountains will flow down, valleys are exalted, enemies fly before you, and the Lord is your refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. To fear Jehovah, then, is to respect God in the eternity of the gospel. But mind, you must leave all other lords, mind that. And to obey the voice of Christ is to believe in Christ, to believe in his word. His word is his voice, and his voice is his word. And what is such a person to do? Let him that thus respects the Lord in this eternity, in this gospel order that is in Christ, let him stay himself upon Jehovah, not in anything short. Stay yourself upon the love of God in its eternity, upon the mercy of God in its eternity, upon the Christ of God in his eternity, upon the promise of God in its eternity. "Let him stay himself upon his God" let him trust in Jehovah in his eternity, "and stay himself upon his God." The original word, rendered God in our version, is El, "Interposer;" just the same as the last syllable of the word Michael in our text. "Let him trust in Jehovah and stay himself upon his Interposer." Well now, you are a poor, miserable creature, compassed with infirmities, and, I was going to say, making mistakes every way pretty well, and you have a great many faults that even you yourself are not acquainted with; so that you have occasion to say, with the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse you me from secret faults," that I do not know anything of. But then you may thus trust upon Jehovah and stay yourself upon Jesus Christ; look at his perfection, rest there; let nothing else be your trust but this wondrous Person. Thus, then, the Lord Jesus Christ did, in his

humiliation, stand fast, immoveable, on our behalf; and he stands up for his people now, and will stand up for them as long as there is an adversary to contend with. By-and-bye there will be no adversary to contend with, and then he will not have to stand for them in the sense he does now; but only to stand with them, and they with him, and that forever. Thus, then, in this way we have a Savior that, if we have eyes to see, we are sure to love. We have a Savior, if we have any understanding in the matter, consciousness of our need of the same, that brings us into sweet harmony with all the perfections of God, the happiest life we can live.

But I notice, in the next place, *he stands FOR the people*. Now there is a fourfold sense in which the Savior stands for the people. First, that we have partly anticipated, substitutionally. He stood in their place. Whatever responsibility we were under, Christ took that responsibility. I ought, by right, to preach a sermon upon this subject of responsibility, if the Lord should so lead me; for I believe there are many good people in our day that are very much bewildered upon this subject; and duty-faith enemies take advantage of this, and are eternally talking of responsibility; and these duty-faith people put responsibility where there is none, and take it away where it exists; and the consequence is, there is hardly any room left for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me once more, remind you that we, apart from Christ, are under a threefold responsibility, which Christ took. Our responsibility lies not where men say it does, namely, that I am responsible for my salvation, and that God will damn me for not accepting his salvation; that I am responsible for the eternal redemption of my soul, and that God will damn me for not accepting that redemption; that I am responsible for my election of God, and that God will curse me to eternity because I would not be chosen. These are the lies that these ministers perpetually, with zeal and ingenuity, propagate. Our responsibility doth not lie there. "He that believes not shall be damned because the unbelieving man is still in his responsible state as a sinner and is responsible for three things. First, for that image of God in which you were created; and if you cannot now appear before God in that image, God will require it of you. Second, you are responsible to God for perfect obedience to his law; that obedience consisting of a perfection of love to God and man. Third, you are responsible to God for all your sins, original, heart, lip, and life sins. That is your responsibility, sir. And when you are called to the bar of God, where is the image in which you were created? You have sinned it away. Where is the honor of the law? You have not honored it. And there are your sins, and you are responsible for them. There is your responsibility. Christ comes in and conforms us to his image, and he is responsible to God to present us in his own image. I am not responsible now to appear before God in the imago of God; but Christ is responsible to present me in the image of God. He has taken this upon him, and so I rest upon him. Second, I am not now responsible for the precept of the law, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. Third, I am not responsible for my sins. Christ has taken them all away; so that my responsibility is gone and gone forever. I am dead to the first Adam, but alive unto God by the last Adam; I am dead to the law, but alive unto God by the gospel; I am dead unto sin, but alive unto God by eternal salvation. Well, then, say some, you are lawless now, you have no responsibility at all. Yes, I have, sir. My responsibility to God now lies in a small compass; it lies in one thing, and a very solemn thing it is. Wherein now do you think that your responsibility lies. Your responsibility, my hearer, lies in this one thing, in the profession you make of the name of Jesus Christ; and you are responsible to God for that profession. And if your profession be a false one, and you should not be able to give a good account, but a bad account, and your profession turns out to be a thing of nothing, then you will be damned as a sinner, and as a transgressor, and as an offender in Christ's kingdom; and you are twice dead; you are dead as a sinner, you are dead as a professor; twice

dead, plucked up by the roots, and you shall have a double damnation, one as a sinner, and the other as a false professor, a hypocrite in Zion. You are therefore responsible to God for the profession you make. And, my hearer, if I am right in this, which I am, how does it become us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith; whether we have come rightly into a profession of his name; whether it is of ourselves, merely of natural conscience, or whether it be of God! Hence, then, every one of us must give an account of himself to God; and if we cannot give a good account, then we are responsible for making this profession; and if it be a false profession, as I have said before, then woe, woe be unto us! but if it be a true profession, vital, Lord, I was a bond-man in the land of Egypt; I was dead, I was an offender, I was afar off; but you did show me my condition, you did bless me with a spirit of prayer, and a spirit of earnestness; you did bring me near to thyself; you did make me acquainted with your dear Son, and his blood, cleansing from all sin, became my hope; his righteousness, justifying from all things, became my hope; your immutability became the spring of my consolation; and Lord, I have been sincere in these things. You know my motive has been pure; you know my soul has been sincere; you know I have stood out with all my might, with all my soul, as in the sight of God, for the vital realities of these blessed truths; and you know Lord, that they are dearer to my heart than mortal life, and that my soul gains by them, you have given to your servant two talents, and I have gained I do not know how many more, Lord; for your truth has done me good in a thousand ways, at a thousand different times; and I love your truth, it is my shield and my buckler; it is my meat and my drink; it is my medicine, my life, my light, my glory and that I do love sincerely the habitation of your house, and the place where your honor dwells. Ah! the man, then, who can give a good account of himself, that has come by his religion in the right way, the Lord will say to such, "Well done, you good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord." But if you are coming with what your soul is professedly adorned, but have not this spirit; and if you have not renounced all creature righteousness, and are not found clothed in Christ's righteousness, then, alas! alas! it will be, "Friend, how did you come in? Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness." And you will be speechless. Not being able to give a good account, you will not be bold enough to give a bad account; but the time must come when the speechless man must open his mouth; for the whole world,

"With joy or terror, shall confess
The glory of his righteousness."

We are not lawless; we repudiate, we disdain, and hold in infinite contempt the reproach heaped upon us that we are lawless. We are not. And that we deny responsibility altogether. We do not deny responsibility; we confess our law responsibility, and that Christ took that; but now he has brought us into a gospel responsibility, and we are responsible to God for the profession we make, and for the use we make of his holy and blessed word. Can you understand this, friends? I think you can. Now here, then, the Lord Jesus Christ came into our law place; he stood for us; he took responsibility that we could not meet. If you are a child of God, you can meet your responsibility now, certainly you can. You have no responsibility now that you cannot meet. See now the apostle gives a good account of himself at the last. I know many a poor child of God at the last, perhaps before he departs, he is very much tried, and can say but little; disease and a thousand things overwhelm the soul. But then, if he cannot make a good profession, if he is not able to make any confession in a dying hour, through darkness of mind, or disease, or whatever it may be that might hinder, he has made a good profession before. So, the apostle, then, "I have fought a good fight."

"What does that consist in? Why, in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. "I have finished my course." What was it to finish his course? Why, to keep in it until he got to the end. He knew what his course was. There is the orbit, from "whom he did foreknow," to "them he glorified;" that is the orbit in which that star moved. "Finished my course," kept in his orbit; no falling off, no easy religion, no bursting, no falling, no wandering star; kept in his course; yes. And how did you fight this good fight, and finish your course? Here is the secret, "kept the faith;" "Kept the faith," because the faith kept him. Here, then, he gives a good account. Jacob gives a good account; "I have waited for your salvation." Ah, I don't think David could give a good account. No, not in the estimation of the Pharisees, not in the estimation of hypocrites, not in the estimate of those who are everlastingly preaching themselves, and insinuating that there is nobody in the world has any morality or good works about them but themselves; no. But David did give a good account. "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire, though he make it not to grow." David felt that he was responsible to God for the profession he made, and he gave a good account of that. And so, with every child of God. Suppose I was going to die now, before I have finished my sermon, or directly afterwards, bless the Lord, I can give a good account. I know how I have come by my religion, and I have stuck to it. Yes, but you have been a poor creature all the way. That is one of the chief reasons why I have stuck to my religion, because I have had nothing else worth sticking to; that is about it. So, the thorn in the flesh brought to light more and more of the apostle's weaknesses. And the Lord know what the apostle wanted. The apostle, in the fleshly pride of his heart, would wish to be better in himself; but the Lord said, You shall not be better in yourself; your comfort shall be the sufficiency of my grace; "my grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then, Lord, I will acquiesce; I will be a poor infirm creature; I will glory in being a poor infirm creature, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Now, have I made this matter clear? I hope I have. You see I am lingering a little upon the book of Daniel. The good editor of the Vessel very kindly sent me a letter, telling me that he is going to upset all I have said; that I am saying such things, that he is going to put an extinguisher upon my conclusions. And it will be just such an extinguisher, I expect, as I once put upon a lamp when I was a boy. And what was that I wanted to put the lamp out, and I could not get an extinguisher, and so I put a straw extinguisher on the lamp, and the lamp burnt the extinguisher, and burnt my fingers too, and so I did not try again. And so, they must take care what sort of extinguisher it is. For, after all, truth is truth, and it is strong, and it will and must prevail. Now I have been rather digressive in these remarks, but shall make no apology for it, because how important is the great matter of responsibility! Ah, to know your need of a surety to bear your responsibility, and then to know what your responsibility now is, that you are not lawless, but under the law of Christ, under the commands of Christ, under the precepts of Christ, under the authority and government of Christ, and to desire, with all our hearts and souls, to walk in love to him, that the love of Christ may go on constraining us to every good word and work.

There are three more senses which I must notice in which Jesus Christ stands for his people. First, as I have shown, in standing in their responsibility, in their place. And if the Son make you free from this law responsibility, you shall be free indeed. Then, second, he stands for them representatively. What a sweet doctrine is that, that whatever he is in his perfection, that they are also! all fair, without blemish, without spot, without wrinkle. Oh, what a prayer is that! a prayer dictated by the Spirit of infinite wisdom, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of your anointed." He stands for us.

“Tis he instead of me is seen,
When I approach to God.”

Then he stands for us also relatively. Now Jesus Christ was heir of all things. If he had erred, or sinned, or in any way come short in his work, then he would have lost his right, could have had no right to the resurrection, no right to eternal life and eternal glory. But he did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. The consequence is, that while the righteousness of the first Adam was invalidated by sin, and the right of the people of the first covenant was invalidated by apostasy, the right of Christ could never be invalidated, because he did no sin. And his people are heirs of God and joint heirs with him, so that whatever his right is to glory, that is our right also. God, in order that we shall not come short, has identified Christ's right with our right. Hence, he is called Jehovah our Righteousness. And I make no hesitation in saying you may just as well talk of God shutting Jesus Christ out of heaven as God shutting one out of heaven for whom Christ lived and died; just as well, because they are one. You might, with as much propriety, talk of God shutting the Husband out of heaven, viz., Christ Jesus, as shutting the bride, the Church, out of heaven; they are one, indissolubly, eternally one. Whatever the Husband is entitled to, the wife, by virtue of this oneness with the Husband, is entitled to also. This is God's order of things. Thanks to our God, he saves righteously as well as mercifully; he saves truthfully as well as graciously; saves in a way that maintains all the honors of his name, various, extensive, and solemn as those honors are. And then he stands also for them as the pattern of what they shall be. I have often read with a deal of pleasure John's words, with other scriptures that give me a little light upon those words, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." He does not, I think, mean by that that we have no idea at all, but I think he means that so glorious will be the state that we do not as yet fully know it. It is revealed to us by the Spirit of God, but only partly; because John immediately adds, "We shall be like him." Well, I go to the 10th of Daniel, and there I read of a person clothed with linen, girded with a golden girdle; there is Jesus Christ in his priesthood, in his glory. Say I to myself, There he is, a pattern of what we are to be, kings and priests to God. When I read of his countenance there being as lightning, his eyes as lamps of fire, or as flames of fire, that is just what we are to be; our countenances lighted up with an intensity of brightness beyond all description. "And his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass," there is his mighty strength, "and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude," not a poor, weak, dying voice. So that he is a pattern of what we are to be. May the Lord lead us more and more into these eternal realities for his name's sake.