

BROTHERLY LOVE

Second Edition

A SERMON

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“Then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:24

THE word of God itself assures us that the Scriptures cannot be broken; not a jot nor tittle thereof shall fail. Now it is clear, as clear as anything well can be, that the precept of the word of God never did in any age, nor in the person of any one of the saints, or ever will, realize perfection. What, then, are we to do, seeing that in many things we all offend, seeing that there is not a just man upon the earth that does good and sins not, what are we to do? We must allow, at least in my view of the subject, the Savior to be in the precept what he is in the promise, namely, the forerunner; and if we view him as the forerunner in the precept, we shall then see that not only did the threatening realize a perfect fulfilment in what Christ suffered, not only did the ceremonial law realize its perfection in Christ as the antitype, not only did the promises realize perfection in Christ, not only did the love of God realize perfection in Christ Jesus, but the precepts also of the Bible realize perfection in Christ Jesus. Yet we must not so deal with the precepts as so to merge them in the perfection of Christ as to take away their just and proper force as they relate to the people of God; we must maintain, as I hope we can do this morning with some degree of pleasure, that perfection which the precept realizes in Christ, and at the same time reserve its proper force and application to the people of God. There is a constant tendency among men to view the free and perfect gospel of God as adverse to everything that is holy, just, and good; and the Savior knew that men would insinuate this, and therefore he said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am come to fulfil them.” Now before I enter upon the subject with which my text is more immediately connected, I will just give you a sample of the precepts that lead to it. For instance, the Savior says of his people that they are the salt of the earth. Now then comes the question, Is any man in the sense there intended the salt of the earth apart from Christ? I think not. That man that receives Christ Jesus in his perfection, that man savors of Christ. And salt is the symbol there of two things: first, it seasons a thing, and makes it pleasant to the taste; and secondly, preservation. And I am sure it is Jesus Christ that makes a sinner acceptable to God; for we all by nature savor before God of nothing but that which is infinitely hateful to the blessed God; but by receiving Jesus Christ, he is the salt, and we become the salt of the earth by receiving him; and he

is in his perfection that by which we become a sweet savor unto God, by which the soul becomes pleasing unto him. Then it conveys the idea of preservation; and so “preserved in Christ Jesus it is Jesus Christ that preserves us; he is the preserving power; yes, bless his dear and holy name. If we are favored to live a life of faith in Christ Jesus, we can never corrupt, we can never become obnoxious in the nostrils of the Most High, we can never become displeasing to him, all the time we continue in the faith. But part with Christ, then you lose your savor, and you become a dead professor; and you are not fit for the world, the profane world, because you know too much about religion for that; and you are not fit for the church; you have lost your savor, you do not savor of the Lord Jesus Christ; but all the time we retain him there is the savor. Thus, then, friends, I think the Christian cannot be the salt of the earth apart from Christ; I think it is simply as he receives Christ Jesus, and as being seasoned with Christ Jesus; it is this that makes the people of God pleasant one to the other, and it is this that makes them acceptable to the blessed God, and that preserves them. And then, again, the Savior said to his disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” Now the people of God are not the light, apart from Christ; Jesus Christ must be your light. He puts an end to darkness, and by him you can see how God is as just as he is merciful, and as merciful as he is just; and how he is as true as he is loving in the eternal salvation of your souls. So that the people of God are not the light of the world apart from Jesus Christ. Just in proportion as men part with the truth of God they part with the light; and just in proportion as men walk in Christ they walk in the light. To walk in the light as God is in the light, is to walk in the truth as God is in the truth; to walk in the light as God is in the light is to walk in Christ as God is in Christ. Then, again, “except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Their righteousness was the righteousness of nature, and our righteousness apart from Christ cannot be any better than theirs; but if I receive Christ’s righteousness, then I have a righteousness infinitely better than the righteousness, or supposed righteousness, of nature; I then have a righteousness infinitely better than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. And there is no advantage in all the gospel, there is no advantage in heaven itself, into which the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ will not bring us. So, then, we do not destroy the law, but by Jesus Christ establish the law. But while I have taken these few words as a text, I shall range over the paragraph this morning with which my text stands connected. I have two ends in view; the one is to show *how the precept realizes its perfection in Christ*; and then *how the Christian is the follower of Jesus Christ in these said precepts*; only with this very great difference, in him there was no drawback, in us there is a drawback; with the flesh we serve the law of sin, while with the mind the law of God.

First, then, I just glance at *the perfection which this precept realized in the Savior*. It says, “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave there your gift before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Now is there a Christian upon the face of the earth that could come forward and say that he stands in all he is in himself, and in all he has ever done, and in all he ever feels that he stands justified by these precepts? Would he not rather say that he is the subject of evil just the reverse of what is contained in these precepts? Do we mean to say we have never been angry with the brethren without a cause? Do we mean to say we have never uttered words approaching to contempt, as the word “Raca”

means contempt, or “a vain fellow;” such is the meaning; and do we mean to say we have never called a brother in a moment of anger a fool? I think very few Christians can say they are altogether free from these faults. And yet these precepts must have their perfection somewhere. Let us look at them first, then, in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause”, the learned, many of them, hold that the words “without a cause” ought not to be there. Those words are not found in many of the ancient copies; it is, therefore, the opinion of many of the learned that it should read without that; then the precept would be direct, namely, “Whosoever is angry with his brother,” that is nothing about the cause, “shall be in danger of the judgment.”

And there are in our translation, or in our Bible, some few verbal errors, but nothing worth speaking of; still there are some. For instance, where Matthew says, speaking of the pieces of silver for which Christ was sold, “That which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet,” though that scripture is not found in Jeremiah, but in Zechariah; just showing that some transcriber has by some oversight put down “Jeremy the prophet” in mistake; so that that word Jeremy ought not evidently to be there, it is a verbal error. Take the word Jeremy (Matthew 27:9) away, and then it reads like this: “That which was spoken by the prophet;” then you will search after what prophet it is. Thus, there is a little verbal error, but that is a mere nothing. So, the fourteenth verse of the last chapter of the book of the Revelation, some of the ancient copies read that differently, a little verbally different, from what ours does where it says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Some of the ancient copies read it in this way, “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life and enter through the gates into the city.” These are mere verbal variations, of no very great importance. And, indeed, when we remember that printing is of a comparatively modern date, and remember that the Holy Scriptures were for thousands of years transcribed by the pen, what is it short of a miracle that the Scriptures are come down to us so free from error as they are? The errors we have, then, I say, are merely verbal. So that whether these words, “without a cause,” ought to be here, or whether they ought not, is not for me to say; I am rather inclined to those that think they ought not to be there; but that, of course, I will leave for you to decide for yourselves; only, as I have lately hinted, pray give me the same privilege as I freely give you, namely, to judge for yourselves in these matters. Let us, then, see how this precept realized perfection in Christ. “Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment;” that is to say, in order to realize the fulfilment of this precept there must be such love to your brother as to make it impossible for you really to be angry with him. You must have such a heart full of love to your brother in the Lord that you must think nothing of his faults, you must pass by them; you must pass by the whole, and love him with all your heart in the face of all; for if you do not, then you do not escape the judgment; for “whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.” Ah, says one, I cannot do that, and I have no desire to do that, and I do not wish to do that, and it is going too far for me. Well, then, here I am quite prepared to testify, and not one of you, I am sure, that know your own hearts, and that know Jesus Christ, will contradict me when I say to you that this is what Jesus Christ has done. God the Father presented you to Christ with all your sins; and was Jesus Christ angry with you, and did he say, “I won’t have you?” No; God the Father presented you to him, filthy as you were, guilty as you were, wretched, lost, cursed, and virtually damned as you were. What says the Savior upon this precept, upon this very subject? Why, he said, “He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one;” for which cause he is not angry, they are my Father’s children, and I love them, and “I will declare your name to my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praises;” I will put my trust in the Lord for my

brethren; and I will say at the last, "Here am I, and the children you have given me." When you did give them unto me, they were sinners; here they are as saints: when you did give them unto me they were unholy; I have made them holy: when you did give them unto me they were enemies; I have made them friends: they were unrighteous, I have made them righteous; they were lost, I have saved them; they were afar off, I have brought them close; they were repulsive, I have made them everything pleasing. So that he was never angry with his brethren; and all your sins could not make him angry with you: he loved you, and do you not sometimes sing the sweet words,

"He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all"?

So. then, Jesus must thus love his brethren, or else he is in danger of the judgment; that is, the judgment of the prophets being against him; for all the prophets predicted he should so love his brethren. Why, say you, where? Well, take the 22nd Psalm: see the sufferings of Christ in that psalm, and after those sufferings mark his testimony, "I will declare your name unto my brethren." Look at the 53rd of Isaiah, indeed, all the Old Testament, just showing that God had loved, and that Christ had loved, and that he should love his brethren, and was never angry with them, always loved them. His heart was so full of love to them, he had not any room for anger, he had not any room in his heart for any hatred. When Peter denied him, did he turn around and say, Now, Peter, I hate you? No, no; he called forth a little afterwards of that out of Peter's heart which his own heart was full of, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?" Thus, then, "Whosoever is angry with his brother" I will leave out the words "without a cause," I like it better without them. The Savior said in a former part of the same chapter, "Blessed are you, when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;" but the word "falsely," in my opinion, has crept in there by some ingenious pious man. It is a remarkable thing the word "falsely" is not found in most of the ancient copies; very few of the ancient copies contain the word "falsely;" and a few thoughts upon that scripture will show that it has more force without the word "falsely" than with. I will give the explanation another time if I should think about it; I dare say I shall; some time it will come in. Now, then, Jesus Christ thus loved his brethren without a drawback, and he has therefore the judgment of God in his favor, the judgment of the prophets in his favor, and I am sure he has your judgment in his favor. Now perhaps I had better, as I go along, just show how the Christian is connected with this. Suppose I met with a man, and he said to me, Well, I have a law in my members bringing me into captivity to the law of sin; I have not always that love to the brethren that I could wish; I do love the brethren, but I do not love them, so unexceptionally, and I do not throw a mantle over their faults so willingly; I do not forgive the seventy seven times so freely as the Lord Jesus Christ did, as I could wish to do, and desire to do; but my comfort is that he did in perfection what I do only in a very humble degree. Now I should like such a man as that; I should feel a union of soul to him; I should say, I like you; you savor of true Christianity, you savor of Jesus Christ, you savor of the precept as dipped in atoning blood, you savor of the precept as a gospel precept, and not as a dry, dead letter of the precept that kills; you savor of the living precept. Have Christ with you in the precept, and then you have nothing to fear.

Again, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca," that is, "a vain fellow," I will give you a sample of that presently, "shall be in danger of the council." The council means God's cabinet; and the prophets were his cabinet, the apostles were his cabinet; and they have arrived, by the Holy Ghost's teaching, at certain conclusions; and they that hold the people of God in contempt are in danger of

the prophets and apostolic council being against them. That is what I understand to be the meaning. Now I will give you an instance of this. He was so delighted with the incoming of the ark of God, the ark of the covenant, the mercy-seat, a covenant God, so established in its spiritual meaning, and so delighted with the thought that the God of heaven and earth was coming to live with him, felt he could not give sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids until he had found out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. David was so delighted, he threw off his attire, mere fleshly royalty, and appeared like one of the brethren; and he took his timbral, and he skipped, and he danced, and he sang. And old Michal, an old Pharisee of the house of Saul, said, "Dear me, what a fool he was! why, he made himself as common as one of the people; and dancing before the ark! Why, what in the world must the people think of him? Why, a great fool to make such a to-do as that with himself. I'll give it to him when he comes home; I won't stop for a curtain-lecture; he shall have a drawing-room lecture; he shall have it before the night long enough." "How glorious was the king of Israel today! Why, I saw you dancing and skipping like I don't know what. I wonder what it all means; as one of the vain fellows;" that is saying "Raca" "as one of the vain fellows." So, David thought he would have just a civil word; he said, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel." Ah, there you are at that election again. Of course, I am, and that at me; it was at me before the world was, and has been at me ever since, and will be at me still. "It was before the Lord, which chose me." I could not help his choosing me; he chose me because he would, and if you are not glad of it, I am it was before the Lord God, that chose me to rule and reign. "And I will be yet more vile than this," if that be vile. What, do you mean to say you are going to make yourself a bigger fool still? I hope so; "and I will be base in my own sight," but I will exalt the God of my salvation. So, he very wisely bade Michal good-bye, gave her the good-bye; no more to do with her as long as he lived. He saw the devil was in her heart, and therefore the devil would be in the house, and David did not choose to live with the devil, seeing he had the blessed God to live with him instead. Thus, then, if you, or I either, if we treat a man with contempt for rejoicing in God's covenant, in God's mercy, in God's truth, if we call him an Antinomian, or in any way revile or reproach him, depend upon it the living God, that will avenge his own elect, will take notice of it, and we shall be in danger of the council; the cabinet council of the Most High in its decrees must give it against us, and we shall be found at last not among the friends, but among the foes of the cause of God.

Now the Savior, how he shines in perfection here I read the 17th of John and see how he speaks of his disciples. Just notice one thing now; read the 17th of John and consider in your own self how the Savior might have spoken of his disciples, that is to say, he might have spoken of them by their sins, he might have spoken of them by their faults and their follies; he might have done so, and that would seem to imply that they were somewhat contemptuous in his sight. But, instead of this, all through that infinitely delightful chapter, the 17th of John, he speaks of them only by what God had constituted them; he speaks of them only by what he himself had made them; he speaks of them only by what the Holy Spirit had made them, "I have given them your word; and they have kept your word, and have known that I came out from you, and I am glorified in them." He prays for them, loves them, holds them in the highest estimation; not a single syllable of unkindness escapes his pure lips through that beautiful scripture. So, then, he is in no danger of the council being against him. I am sure every prophet is for him, I am sure every apostle is for him, and I am sure every saved sinner is for him; I am sure everyone that feels his need of the eternal mercy of God by Christ Jesus is for him. Now, then, as the Savior escaped that danger in

perfection, and that part realized perfection in him, let us pray for grace whereby we may walk in the same spirit. We do not expect perfection; I do not expect it in you; I think, upon the whole, you are as good a people as can be I believe you are; I believe as much devoted to God, time, talent, body and soul, affections, heart, and mind, as any people under the heavens. That is my estimation of you; I am persuaded of it. But at the same time, while I am thus persuaded of you as a body, the main body of you, I cannot expect perfection. You will have your ebullitions of mind, passions, and trials, and provocations; we must expect it. Let us, therefore, avail ourselves of the privilege given, namely, to confess one to the other that we are faulty, to esteem each the other better than himself, and not to esteem self, better than others. Let us bless the Lord that this precept has realized perfection in Christ; let us bless the Lord that we have the same spirit, not in the same degree, but in kind; that we would not hold a man in contempt, but rather highly esteem those ministers that God has blessed us with, if we see they are born of God. And those that we do not feel satisfied are born of God and sent of God, perhaps the less we say about them the better. There are some men, I cannot come to any conclusion about them. I have a very high estimation of their natural qualities, and a great many things good about them; yet if I were asked as a dying man what I thought of their real condition, I do not feel able to answer that question. When I look at some things, it looks as though they must be born of God; then, when I look at the terrible contradiction, speaking with enmity of the people of God, that staggers me again; I am obliged to leave them; so that I cannot hold them in that high estimation that I do those with whom I feel satisfied. Where I meet with ministers that stand out clearly on free grace ground, and that stand as iron pillars out decided for God, and I have a kindred spirit and a union of soul, there I can highly esteem them for their work's sake. And private Christians, where I can feel satisfied that they are decided, and that they do know what they profess, there I can highly esteem them for their character's sake, for their faith's sake, for their spirit's sake. "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Therefore, people may scold me for not declaring brotherly love to such and such persons; but I cannot help it, if I cannot see in them that which endears itself to my spirit. I cannot tie myself to anything. You know that certain things have certain affinities, and certain things have certain repulsions. Grace is affianced to grace; where there is grace in one heart, that connects itself with grace in another heart; but where there is grace in the one heart, and not in the other, there, there is repulsion, there is antagonism, antipathy, enmity, between the two seeds, the one that is converted merely after the flesh, and the one that is converted after the spirit. Thus, then, we desire not to be angry with the brethren; he has been merciful to us, and he loves us, and we desire to avoid being angry with them, that we may not have the judgment of the word of God against us. Second, much less should we hold them in contempt; this, I am sure, if we are taught of God, we cannot do. We see how dearly men have paid for this. I need not remind you of the instances in the Bible where men of God have been held in contempt, where the great God has stepped in. I need not remind you of Haman, I need not remind you of Pharaoh, I need not remind you of Ananias and Sapphira, need not remind you of others, where the great God has stepped in to avenge his own elect.

Again, "whosoever shall say, You fool." Now this must mean not in the kindly sense. Why I have called you fools a great many times, and shall do again, I dare say; but I have always done so in the kindest manner. Well, that is pretty kindness too! Well, I do not think it is wrong. Why, the poor disciples, there they were fretting and stewing, and thought they had been deceived; he said, "O fools!" what fools you are! He did not say it unkindly, but lovingly; just the same as you would say, "You silly thing; it's all right, only you can't see it yet; silly thing." "O fools" to doubt.

Why, I have died for you, I have risen for you, I am going to heaven for you, to prepare a place for you; I will come again for you, and I will receive you. Why, what foolish things you are! that is the way I have called you fools sometimes; so, you see I do take those sorts of liberties, and I hope you will always grant it to me, because I mean well. I think, therefore, the word "fool," in our text, must mean in the malicious sense of the word. Jesus Christ never called his disciples fools in the malicious sense, in the vindictive sense, in the contemptuous sense. That man that could hold a man a fool, because in reality he is wise, namely, receives the truth, loves it, and abides by it, that man is in danger of hell fire. But, however, I will leave out person, just for a moment, and come to principle. There is a man that can give you some account of soul trouble; "Oh, that is foolishness," say you. That man can tell you of his soul being delivered from the horrible pit and from the miry day. The natural man says, "Ob, that is foolishness; away with your experience." That man can rejoice that his name is written in heaven; that man can rejoice, peradventure, even so favored, in the sweet assurance of ere long seeing Jehovah's face with joy. The brother professor, that knows nothing of this experience, "Oh," he says, "it is all foolishness, that man is a fool, it is all foolishness." Now that man to whom the things of the Spirit is thus foolishness, to whom the truth of God is thus foolishness, in whose eyes the people of God are fools in the sense I have stated, that man is in danger of hell fire, die when he may, if he die with that notion, that the things of the Spirit he calls foolishness; that man is in danger of hell fire. Therefore, "despise not you the chastening of the Almighty no, the man that knows what this chastening is, he will not do so. Thus, you see, then, Jesus Christ in perfection answers to these precepts, first, he was not angry with his brethren; second, he never held them in contempt, but just the reverse; third, he never called them fools on account of their reception of God's truth, for therein lay their wisdom, and He ever commended them, never spoke a malicious word unto them. See Solomon's Song, what a beautiful illustration is the whole of that book of the precepts contained here!

Now, then, it goes on. "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Now what was the gift that Christ brought to the altar of God? First, his obedient life. What was the gift that Christ brought to the altar of God? Himself, the sacrifice of himself. Well, my text says, "If you remember your brother has something against you; go your way, first be reconciled to your brother." You are not going to tell us this morning that Jesus Christ did this, are you? Yes, I am. What, did he remember, then, that any one of his brothers had anything against him? Yes, yes; they had several things against him; and so, he went his way first, and was reconciled to them. Several things against him, not justly, friends, you know I do not mean that. Peter said, "Far be it from you, Lord; you shall not suffer;" you are wrong. Very well, and all the disciples were opposed to him; "Because I have said these things unto you, that I am going away, sorrow has filled your hearts." Yes, we cannot make it out, we do not feel altogether right about it; something wrong somewhere. Why, say you, I never thought the disciples could get there. Unhappy me, fiends, I have been there a great many times, quarrelling with the Lord, thinking this is wrong, and that wrong, and the other wrong; but it always proves in the end that the Lord was right, and that I was wrong. Now what did Jesus do? Well, before I offer my gift, I will be reconciled to my brethren. So, they sit down, and he laid aside his outer garment, took a towel, and girded himself, and began to wash their feet. You have something against me; I will prove I have nothing against you. Well, says Peter, this is going too far; you shall never wash my feet. "If I wash you not, you have no part with me." Ah, said Peter, "Lord,

not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” It is a nice answer. Every Christian can feel there is a power and savor in that answer. Well, you know what the Savior says in those chapters, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th of John. There he is reconciled to his brethren. Now I am reconciled, reconciled myself to you. I have told you all these things; I have shown you now that I have no unkind feeling, but just the reverse; now I will go and offer my gift. Well, presently another circumstance occurs; the disciples go to sleep. Ah, he ought not to have brought us here; could not expect us to watch, poor creatures as we are. I wonder what he will say to us. What will he say? Why, he will be reconciled to you; he will say, “Could not you watch one hour?” and then, to show how he is reconciled to you, would not be angry with you, would not treat you contemptuously, would not call you fools. “The flesh is weak, but the spirit willing.” Oh, my hearer, who would not serve such a master as that? Who could help being otherwise than in love supreme with such a God as this, reconciling us to himself? Peter cuts the man’s ear off. Ah, you think I am wrong, then, for not using the sword; never mind, I will be reconciled to you. “Suffer you thus far,” touched the man’s ear and healed it, reconciled. One of our poets may well sing,

“Love like Jesus’ none can measure,
Nor can its dimensions know;
Tis a boundless, endless river,
And its waters freely flow.”

And what is not heart-work is not God’s work. Reconciled himself to them; yes, before he goes to offer his gift. Well, the dear Savior reaches the altar, offers the wondrous gift, rises from the dead; having offered himself without spot unto God, and reached eternal perfection, he is about to offer himself again to God, not sacrificially, but as an intercessor. But I must go and be reconciled to my brethren, and then I will go and offer the gift, go and offer myself to God. I will not go to heaven until I have been reconciled to them. I know they have a little against me; and you know how he appeared to them again, and again, and again, until he had breathed fresh peace into their souls, brought them into sweet harmony with himself. Now, then, I would not go to God, I would not go home to heaven and offer myself as an intercessor there for you and leave you with the impression that I have something against you, because you all forsook me and fled, and you would naturally think I have something against you. And therefore, in order, before I ascend on high, to convince you that I am still the same, that I still love you, still concerned, for you, I will be reconciled unto you. And so I need not say he not only put everything right with them before he went to heaven, but showed that things should with them be eternally right; gave them the great mission in substance, “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” that is, preach good news, good tidings, to every creature; and they did as we were obliged to do, leave it with the Lord to convince men that they are good tidings. Thus, then, this precept realized its perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am sure that these things, rightly understood, will endear the Savior unto us.

But let us have just a word in conclusion, then. Now here are three men, and they wish to serve God, and are going to bring their offering to serve God. Stop, you ought to remember that your brother has something against you. Recollect how you have been condemning poor Job; you thought he went too far, and that he was too high in doctrine, and that he was this, and that he was that.