

MINISTERS OF SATAN

A SERMON

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“For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Revelation 16:14

WE very happily live in a part of the world and in an age of the world in which we can understand this part very nicely. We cannot understand the other similes so well because we know not what it is to suffer the tyranny of adversaries, so as to be subjected to those things that Christians even in this country in gone by days have been subjected to. Now there are five things, clearly so, suggested by this simile used, “Three unclean spirits.” The spirits of course mean the spirits of the men themselves. But see how helpless they are now to what they have been in times past. In times past they have been like dragons; in times past they have been rampant, like the wild beast; in times past they have been authoritative, like the prophet; but you will observe this is now all departed from them; and now, instead of being compared to these mighty powers, the tyranny of the dragon, and the ferociousness of the wild beast, and the authority of the prophet, they are reduced to that of frogs. And we do rejoice in it; we don't mind these frogs hopping about in our land, all the time they are kept in their present position and have it not in their power to do any harm. Now look at five things. The first is that of antipathy; there is an antipathy between human beings and frogs; no one could feel any sort of sympathy with frogs; and so, this is to set forth the loathsomeness of all erroneous ministers in the sight of the blessed God. Every minister, therefore, that is a minister of error is loathsome in the sight of the Lord; in direct contrast to what the apostle Paul said, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ.” But then these spirits we presently have to define do not savor of God's Christ; they do not savor of that by which the soul is saved. But “we,” said the apostle, “are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved and in them that perish: to the one we are a savor of death unto death; to the other a savor of life unto life.” And how were they a sweet savor both ways? For this reason, they all stood by the people of God, and stood by what the Lord had done for them, and took great, and earnest, and holy care to feed the church of God which he had purchased with his own blood; that is the way in which the apostles were a sweet savor unto God, and a savor of life unto life in all that believe. And the way in which they were a sweet savor of Christ unto God in them that perish was partly the same; namely, by abiding faithfully by the truth, and insisting upon it that there could be no salvation without regeneration; that there must be

a transition from death to life; so that they were clear of the blood of those that perished. And another way in which they were a sweet savor of Christ unto God in them that perish was, that the prophets and apostles were not overcome by adversaries, they were not led astray by them; no, said the apostle, if an angel from heaven should come to attempt to lead us astray from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from this amazing grace by which we are saved, let him be accursed, let him be excluded; “to whom we gave way,” said the apostle, in another place, “no, not for an hour.” Thus, then, the erroneous priest is loathsome; “My soul loathed them,” said the Lord in the 8th verse of the 11th of Zechariah; and so, then, they are loathsome. But the ministers of God are a sweet savor of Christ unto God; and all the people of God are a sweet savor of Christ unto God. It is a truth, and I bless the Lord that most of you know it, that there is no savor pleasing to God but Christ. Therefore, when you come up before God in prayer, in praise, in love, or in any of your services, if it be not by faith in Christ, so that your prayers savor of Christ, and your praises savor of Christ, and your cup of cold water to a disciple, or your ministration to the cause of God, if it be not in love to Christ, and you do not savor of Christ, then you are not pleasing to God. There is nothing out of Christ that can be pleasing to God; and so, we are approved in Christ, accepted in Christ. The next thing implied in this simile is that of powerlessness. What a powerless thing is a frog! what a poor, helpless thing! they hop about, it is true, but they are powerless. So, every erroneous minister must ultimately become powerless. Whatever power he may have, the time will come, by-and-bye, when he will lose all his power; his right arm must be dried up, his right eye must be darkened, and he must be powerless at the last. So, then, those spirits are like frogs; not only loathsome, but powerless; and so, they must become ultimately powerless. Not so the ministers of God, they will never become powerless; no, the people of God shall be strong, and shall do exploits. Our bodies may get weak, but that will not weaken our faith, that will not weaken our Jesus Christ, that will not weaken the Spirit of God, and that will not weaken the word of God, and that will not weaken the grace of God, nor weaken the power of Christ, nor weaken the mercy of God; but will often make way for more of the infinite riches of that mercy to come in unto our souls. Thus, then, if we belong to the spirits of devils, we must by-and-bye, whatever strength we have now, lose the whole, and go away into eternal privation, even in this sense; but if, on the other hand, we are receivers of the truth, and love the truth as it is in Jesus, then as the outward man decays the inward man shall be renewed, and that day by day. But again; the third thing in those creatures is that of imitation; we shall have a word upon that presently, when we come to “working miracles.” Now people that have been to Italy, the marshes, where frogs are innumerable, say that their music is really remarkably interesting; there is a kind of concert among them; and some naturalists are very interested indeed in their music. Well, Parkhurst observes that the name by which they are called in the Greek, *balracos*, signifies “hoarse croakers.” And so, this sets forth their imitations of the gospel. Why, if I hear, for instance, Popery praised up, it is all a croak to me; if I hear free will preached, it is all a croak to me; if I hear duty-faith preached, it is all a croak to me; it is all despicable. But when I come to the music of the gospel when I come to the holy apostles as sons of thunder, when I come to the holy apostles as sons of consolation, rolling as a testimony in upon us everlasting consolation by the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no comparison. And the fourth thing is that those creatures were in Egypt held in religious veneration and became a curse to those that so held them, one of the plagues of Egypt. So, my hearer, if I hold a false prophet in veneration, religious veneration, and I am led by him, he will be my deceiver, he will deceive my soul; he will put me off with a false hope; he will rest my precious soul upon a sandy foundation; he will, Satan being the teacher, for you read that Satan is transformed into an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness; what a curse that man will be to me! he will deceive my soul, tell me I am on the way to heaven, while I am all the time on the way to hell; how will my soul turn round and curse that man when I get into hell that has so deceived

me!

So, then, as these creatures were held in veneration, so false ministers are held in ten thousand times more veneration than true ministers are. But then I would rather be without such veneration. Only think of a priest going into a house, and down falls the woman on her knees before him, and the man too, if he is there. And in the different orders in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, all the inferior priests bow the knee to the superior. Why, what is all this? However, I will not occupy time upon this point. Let us see, then, how this stands in direct contrast to the true minister of God. What says the true minister of God? Why, he says, "I have no dominion over your faith." The greatest prophet and the greatest apostle that ever lived never attempted to usurp dominion over the consciences of others, but told them the truth, and concluded thus: "I speak," said that man of God, "as unto wise men; judge you what I say." And then the destiny of these creatures; these creatures were all destroyed in Egypt; and so, if we are belonging to these spirits, destruction must be our end. And let us bless God they have lost their dragon like power; they have lost their wild beast power; they have lost their authoritative power. Hence the Pope's Encyclical Letter: why, three hundred and fifty years ago it would have shaken the whole kingdom, paralyzed and petrified all the people in the land; the shops would have been shut up, there would have been such mourning, and such a to-do. And now we laugh at it, we smile at it; we rejoice in the liberty that the Lord has granted us, and we pity the poor old gentleman that is so doting, driveling, and stupid, as to write such a piece of nonsense as he has written. We smile at it, and turn around and say, Why, he must be not only in his second or his third, but his thirteenth childhood, ever to have written such a piece of nonsense in a open day like this. God keep us, then, contending for the truth, and the truth will make us free, and we shall not only enjoy freedom ourselves, but be the means of bringing others into the same freedom.

Now the next point I notice is the spirits. "They are the spirits of devils." I have a great objection to the perpetually referring to the original, and I refer to it as little as possible, because it is not every one that can go with me into the original, and therefore, they know not whether I am right or wrong; yet there are times when we may with some, perhaps little advantage, refer to the original. Suffice it, then, to say that there are two words in the Greek language, the one meaning fallen angels, that is, the devil, and those who are literally and abstractedly devils; there is another word in the Greek language which signifies heathen gods. And it is not the word that signifies devils abstractedly, but heathen gods, that we have in our text; so that we might read it, though, I confess, the way I am about to render it would be an explanation as well as a translation. that "these are the spirits of heathen gods." And what is Popery, with all its images and doings, but heathenism in the Christian name? even to come no nearer home than that. "These are the spirits of heathen gods." Shall I once more just remind you of the Spirit of God, what the Spirit of God really is? I mean in the Christian, in contrast to all false spirits. I have recently given a definition of the same, but I do not think that a definition here will be at all out of place. Now it is clear, then, that our eternal salvation is by the good will of God, willing us his dear Son, and appointing us to obtain eternal salvation by him; in a word, that the spirit of the real Christian is the spirit of God's testamentary will, God's will in willing, not conditional, any further than certain conditions laid upon the Savior, which he was to achieve, God willing us eternal blessedness after the order of the covenant to which we have before referred. Now in all ages his people have been brought into the spirit of this good will, of this new covenant, of this eternal priesthood of Christ. Hence, when the Lord appeared to Abraham, and as he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, we learn that that oath which the Lord swore by himself had reference to the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, then, the Spirit of

God in the Christian is that Spirit by which you become acquainted with this new covenant, with this eternal priesthood, with the yea and amen promises of the gospel. And when those who have received this Spirit of adoption are brought into this spirit, meet with another gospel, they feel an antipathy to that gospel; just the same as others, that have not the spirit of God's good will, that have not the spirit of God's new covenant, feel a deadly enmity against the spirit of the gospel. Hence the Lord has said that he would put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Now, then, if we have the spirit of faith in Christ's eternal priesthood, and if we have the spirit of understanding, understanding the new covenant, for "the spirit of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant," if we have this spirit, then it will stand in clear contrast to the spirit of heathen gods; for that, I say, may be properly rendered here in the way I have now quoted it; "These are the spirits of heathen gods," in contrast to the Spirit of Jehovah, in contrast to that spirit of grace and supplication which the Lord blesses his people with, in contrast to that spirit described by the apostle when he says, "We have not received the spirit which is of the world, but that which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given unto us of God." Now mark that Jesus Christ was freely given to us of God; you will not deny that; no Christian staggers for a moment at that, that Jesus Christ was freely given to us of God; and God in giving Christ gave everything, because everything is in Christ; so that in giving Christ he gave us these things freely, absolutely, and eternally. This, then, is that spirit of which the apostle said, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The word "Christ" means "anointed," and to have the Spirit of the anointed is to have the spirit of that gospel set before us in the 9th of Daniel, where the Savior is set forth as putting an end to sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness. The man that has that Spirit is one with this covenant, one with this High Priest, one with this gospel; why, that man, let his darkness, his doubts, his fears, his troubles, be what they may, if he have the Spirit of Christ, then he is a child of God, and if a child of God, then an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Thus, then, the mighty difference between the ministers of Satan and the ministers of God; and the mighty difference between the spirit of human religions, and the spirit of that divine religion that is of God, ends in God, unites us to God, and enables us to rejoice in God, and makes it our prayer with David that he would send out from time to time his light and his truth, and that we might be brought to him, and he be our exceeding joy. I thought I would give this definition.

Now you will observe here is a fourfold mission of these spirits. They are to work miracles; this is the first part; upon this I need not to dwell. Now you are to understand the miracles which these spirits of heathen gods, of human religions, render it in that way, it will convey the meaning, that these spirits of humanly devised religions are to work miracles, imitatively, pretendedly. Hence you have Jannes and Jambres, the two magicians of Egypt; they cast down their rods, and they so succeeded that their rods, somehow or another, appeared to be serpents; only Aaron's rod swallowed them all up; and they also brought forth blood after Moses had done so, but from imitation; and they also brought forth frogs, that I don't wonder at, because that is bringing forth something like themselves; but they could proceed no farther. Now all this was done in imitation. And so, all the pretended miracles that have been wrought by men, they have been done in a kind of imitation, in order to build up their religion. It is talking about things very far off from us in my ultimate object to refer to Popery; but I may just make one remark here, that if any of you were thrown, in the course of providence, into company with a sensible man, a Roman Catholic, you would be surprised what faith they have in the fables and so-called miracles that are said to have been wrought. You could not shake them. I had a conversation with the late Daniel O'Connell; I met with him, had some conversation with him upon the subject, could not shake him. "Oh," he said, "no other church has wrought miracles; our church has wrought miracles." And I said, "Really, do you believe? You

do not, as a sensible man, believe that doctrine of the transubstantiating elements; you do not believe that?" "Why, of course I do; I believe everything." Now that was the late Daniel O'Connell; he was no fool, he was a man of great learning and of great experience, and a man of great observation, and a man very interesting to talk to upon general matters, as an intelligent man; but when you came to spiritual things, there, poor dear man, he demonstrated the truth of the word of God, that "the world by wisdom knows not God." And so, the Savior said he came that they which see might be made blind; and so, when the wisest men are tested by the truth of God, they prove to be like the rest of us, blind. Thus, then, these spirits pretend to work miracles. But how does the Christian differ in this department? The Christian differs in this department in paying no respect to anything but the word of God; we take our stand just where the Lord says we are to do. The Lord said, "If any man has a dream, let him tell the dream", and then my people will be able to see what it is; "and if any man has my word, let him speak my word faithfully: for what is the chaff to the wheat, says the Lord?" That is just where we are, that all human pretensions to us are but chaff; but the great miracle of a Savior's life, the great miracle of a Saviors death, the great miracle of our being brought out of darkness into light, and the great miracle of our eternal salvation, for all this is miraculous grace, these are the great, the open, the living facts upon which we dwell, and by which we are saved, and for which the Old Testament saints suffered, for which New Testament saints have suffered. So, we throw all their miracles and all their pretensions to the four winds, and sing with Watts,

"Let all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art;
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

See, then, the mercy of being delivered from humanly devised religions, and to be brought to this dear spirit of the gospel; see the mercy of recognizing which are miracles, grace of the blessed God, and standing fast in his word, paying no attention to anything else. We can hardly, it is true we see it, and so we must believe it, but one could hardly believe it if he did not see it, that a poor dying worm should arrogate to himself such prerogatives and such authorities pertaining to eternity as those with which the Pope of Rome is clothed. Man, indeed, is blind, and blind, and blind, and if any good be done in opening their eyes it can be only by the grace of the blessed God. I have no doubt in my own mind but that our text represents that people and all like them in their wicked and degraded state. The dragon, I trust, has in a great measure finished his course; and the beast, I trust, has in a measure, as a wild beast, finished his course; I hope the authoritative prophet has too, so that we may say, with Zacharias, "That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." And while the Roman Catholics are having meetings from week to week, in France and in England, for the conversion of England, I hope we can pray also for the conversion of France; and, if the Lord should be pleased to give us a spirit of grace and supplication, instead of their prayers being answered, and the English people going over to that horrid scene of darkness and delusion, that thousands upon thousands should, by the testimony of God's word and by his grace, rise up among the Catholics, and come out from among them. Let our souls, then, rejoice that our God has not forsaken the earth, and that he is driving these spirits about, casting out these evil spirits, and putting his own Spirit into the place thereof. So, then, after all, there is nothing like the gospel, nothing like the sure word of the blessed God.

Then it is said of these spirits that they "go forth unto the kings of the earth." How clear this is! Can

anything be clearer? Most of you, especially men at least, are acquainted, no doubt, with the history of our own country, and you can look back and see some of our kings undergoing penance at Canterbury, at the shrine of Thomas a Becket; another undergoing a flagellation at the same place; and several kings subjected, as you are aware, to their power, so that what can be more descriptive? "They go forth unto the kings of the earth." But did the holy prophets ever seek to convert people through the kings of the earth? Did the holy apostles ever seek to carry on the cause of God by the kings of the earth? "Tarry you in Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high." I must say, though perhaps I am going a little too far for the feelings of some, I must say that I read the annual speech of the Emperor of the French, which he has delivered this year, with a very great deal of pleasure. I do think that the Emperor is half a Protestant in heart. He declares in that speech that there shall be equality of freedom for all religions. Then, I say, good-bye the Pope. The ten thousand French soldiers are coming home; and God grant that in Italy as well as in France the glorious gospel of the blessed God may prevail over the darkness that has hitherto reigned. I rejoice in every sign and symptom of the uprising of the glorious gospel of God. But we will not petition the Emperor to make his people Protestants; we will not petition him and advise him to force them to it, because we well know that force can make hypocrites, but it can never make Christians. But we rejoice so far as we see the signs and symptoms of liberty, especially in that nation that has become so useful to us, as well as ourselves useful to them, in a commercial point of view; and, after all, apart from religion considered, commerce is the proper business of man. And while we rejoice in liberty we will not go to kings; we will go to God himself, and we will say, Lord, cause your glorious gospel to extend east, west, north, and south; and that, while the population of the globe is increasing, your glorious word may travel, and that we may rejoice in the subjugation of kingdoms; that is, their voluntary, shall I call it, subjugation; for I am sure, when the people become convinced of what the truth is, they will receive it; and then the king must go with them, he must conform to them then; the power lies with the people. And when once the mighty tide of popular conviction sets in, it is a tide that will overflow all the banks of Popery and of opposition, and will turn every hindrance into a floating island, and just conduct it where they please. Stand upon the rock of truth, and begin to sing, amidst these tribulations, "The Lord God omnipotent reigns." So, then, they go to the kings of the earth. Has not the Pope told us, in his Encyclical Letter, that the kings ought to be subjected to the authority of the Pope? which is the same as saying they ought to be subjected to the authority of the devil. I expect the present Emperor, in his own mind, too much of a gentleman to bring it out thought of the saying of one of his predecessors, Philip the Fair, when the Pope spoke similarly to him: "I will give your fool's head," he said, "to understand that my authority shall be subjected to no one." And I expect that is about what the Emperor had in his mind; and I am not so much of a gentleman, and I have no doubt that if I had been in his place, I should have said it; but, as the boy said, he thinks it, no doubt. There is a substratum, I believe, of thorough Protestantism in his mind, and it will ooze out by degrees. And our public press is by no means, in my opinion, justified in the unkind things it says of the Emperor. He has never yet offered an insult to England; he has never slighted our interests; he is always ready with us and ready for us; and therefore, every sign of leaning towards that which is right let us encourage. Do not let us try to quench the smoking flax, to break the bruised reed. Never mind what he has been; praise him for what he is now. So, then, I still think that the people of God are not to go to the kings of the earth for their religion, but to the King of heaven and earth, and to rejoice that his truth shall prevail. It is a pretty compliment to them, then, these false ministers, to call them frogs; and they are the spirits of humanly devised religions, and that they work miracles not in the sight of God, but in the sight of men; mark that; the Holy Scriptures do not say they work miracles in the sight of God; that would not do, because the Lord knows better, he knows they do not work any miracles; but in the sight of men. The Bible

says, "He has power to make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men;" that is, the Pope would send a threatening, and men would think it was actually a divine judgment; so, not in the sight of God, but in the sight of men. And so, they go to the kings of the earth, in contrast to the people of God, who look only to God.

And then notice the next clause, "and of the whole world." Can anything be more expressive? John describes that which should arise; "the whole world." Does not the Pope claim universal dominion? Does he not say he is Christ's vicar, and that the whole world is given into his, the Pope's, hands? Therefore, he says to his frogs, Go you and hop about, crawl about, creep about, all over the world, the whole world. Can anything be more expressive? Imitation, you see, a mimicry of Christ. Christ has sent his apostles; he sent his apostles into the whole world, and I rejoice in that. Some think we high Calvinists do not know what to do with such scriptures; "Go you into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature." Why, I have never stood opposed to that; I rejoice in such words in the Holy Scriptures; only if you do go to preach to every creature, let it be the gospel, that's all. If you come and tell me falsehood, that is not gospel, you know; if you come and want to put me off with the sprinkling of the forehead instead of the Holy Spirit sprinkling my soul, that is not gospel, you know; if you want to come and put me off with godfathers and godmothers as sureties for my sins, instead of letting me have Jesus Christ, that is not gospel; if you want to come and put me off with Puseyite ceremony and priestly absolution, instead of the Holy Spirit bringing peace into the conscience, and sealing home the word into the soul, that is not gospel. So, then, let us preach the gospel in all the world, as far as the Lord shall enable us, and to every creature; only let it be the gospel. I do not hold duty-faith or free will to be gospel; I hold nothing to be gospel but free grace. The origin of salvation must be of grace; and the mediatorial department, it was an act of free and entire grace on the part of the Savior to do as he did; and for the Holy Spirit to regenerate the soul is an act of grace; and for the Lord to preserve us, and supply us, and uphold us, and put away and blot out all our sins, they are acts of grace; and it is by grace that the top stone shall be brought home, with shouting, "Grace, grace unto it." So, then, to preach the gospel to every creature is in effect to preach the grace of God to every creature; for nothing else ever can save a soul from death and lift it into the regions of everlasting joy; none can enter there but those that are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now John foresaw all this; he has predicted it; we live in an age when it is fulfilled.

But, lastly, "to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Mind, this is not their purpose; they do not know this. The Jews and Gentiles gather together to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined to be done. That was not their motive; they did not mean to hold Christ as the Son of God, and to carry out God's gracious purpose concerning the putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself; no; they were gathered together, and when they were gathered together, and when they crucified the Savior, God was there to see that that should be subservient to the establishment of his counsels. He had predicted such a death, and Christ died according to the Scriptures, and they fulfilled the Scriptures in condemning him; the Scriptures predicted what he should suffer, and he suffered according to the Scriptures. And so, they do not know that they are gathering the people into that position in which they will by-and-bye come into collision with God Almighty. If you can find out what it is they fight against while they are on their journey, that will give you an idea of what the end will be with all such. Now the word of God assures us, as the 17th chapter will show, that these people make war with the Lamb. What does that mean? First, and chiefly, Christ in his sacrificial character. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, has perfected forever all them that are sanctified; and the man that fights against that fights against the Lamb of

God, though he may profess at the same time to love the Lamb of God; that the Lamb of God has put away all the sin of those for whom he died, and put it away eternally; that as this Lamb is spotless, so has he, by his sacrificial work, constituted the people what he is, spotless, without fault, wrinkle, or blemish; not a fault can ever be laid to their charge. The man that fights against this truth, let him profess what love he may to God or to Christ, he is fighting against the Lamb. But the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and will he not carry out the perfection of the sacrifice that he has made? Shall he gratulate the church in the progress of time, and say to her while she is simply on her journey through this vale of tears, "Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" and when she gets to the end, it turns, out that those congratulations were premature; that, alas! instead of being morning, it is night; instead of being fair as the moon, she is ugly as sin; instead of being clear as the sun, as dark as midnight; and instead of being terrible as an army with banners, she is conquered by some adverse power, and carried away. To hell, from whence it came, let such a thought be drove; we know that she shall appear at the last at his right hand. Thus, then, those that stand in any way against this eternal perfection that is by Christ Jesus war with the Lamb, and he shall overcome them. "And they that are with him," in this perfection, in this spotlessness, "are called;" well it may be said so; for if God had not by effectual calling brought his people to it, they never had come. "And chosen." Ah, the calling comes first with them, and presently they discover, to their astonishment, they are chosen before the world was. And what follows? "And faithful;" abide faithfully by the truth; these are they that overcome. Now, if we are at war with these truths, where shall we come to? The dragon, the main body of the people, and false prophets, led the Egyptians on against the Israelites to their own destruction. The dragon, the main body of the people, the wild beast, and false prophets, led the Canaanites against the Jews to their own destruction. The dragon, the main body of the people, the wild beast, and false prophets, fought against Christ, and crucified him, to their own destruction. And there is a tremendous day to come, when millions of the human race, all, indeed, let them be who they may, that live and die in a state of ignorance of and antipathy to this eternal order of things, they will have to meet the God of battles in his wrath; his tremendous thunderbolts, his dreadful tempest, will meet them.