

THE BEST ESTABLISHMENT

A SERMON

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“That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, says the Lord that does this” Amos 9:12

WE gather from the 15th chapter of the Acts that the meaning of this verse is, that the Gentiles should be led by the Spirit of God to seek the mercy and the salvation of God. And perhaps one reason why Edom is mentioned is because the Edomite's were very violent against the children of Israel, as you learn, in olden times; so that that spirit that Esau manifested to Jacob seems to have prevailed from generation to generation among the people. Also there were many threatening's in the word of God to the Edomite's, which, by themselves, would be calculated to send the whole of them into despair; but there are other scriptures, also, that show that even among that people some should be saved that the Lord would have an establishment on the earth, and that some of the worst of men, and of the vilest enemies that ever existed, should be brought into and partake of that grace. And it is on this ground, too, the ground of the ability of Christ to save, the ground of the grace of God being free as well as sufficient for any and every emergency, that the Savior said to the apostles, “Go and preach the gospel to every creature.” You cannot meet with a case too bad for the Lord, you cannot meet with anything too hard for him. And therefore, when sinners are awakened each sinner thus awakened will think that he is the very caste of character against whom the threatening's are especially directed, and that therefore, for him there is no hope. But when the gospel comes in and shows the sufficiency of the grace and mercy of the blessed God and presents those examples we have in the word of God, then none, no one who knows his necessity need despair. Our text, I think, ought to be referred in the first place to the apostolic age. The preceding verse, which I shall have to make use of presently, sets forth that establishment which the Lord would have on earth, and that the apostles should possess the Gentiles. And so on the day of Pentecost we find Gentiles brought in as well as Jews; and perhaps our text had a literal fulfilment upon that day in some of the Edomite's being brought in; for in the 11th of Isaiah, when the prophet is speaking of the progress of the gospel by the apostles, it there says, “They shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Amnion shall obey them;” and so on the day of Pentecost you find men from all these regions were brought in, as the first fruits and samples of the millions that should, before time completed its course, be brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the text, then, with what it says and what it implies, presents us with four things. The first is,

that order of things into which the remnant of Edom and the heathen are to be brought. Second, their adoption as implied in their being called by the Lord's name. Third, the exclusion of everything in their eternal welfare but the Lord Himself; "says the Lord that does all this." And then the fourth would be, though I fear I shall not reach so far, the ultimate prospects of this happy people.

First then *that order of things into which the remnant of Edom and the heathen are to be bought.* We may take the Gentiles at large to be meant by the terms, "the remnant of Edom;" and the apostles, in entire keeping with the way in which they themselves were saved, were to possess the Gentiles. Hence the apostle was writing to the Gentiles chiefly at Philippi when he said, "You are all partakers of my grace;" as though he should say, You are a part of the remnant which the Lord declared should be brought in; and just as I was brought in, you are brought in, and just as I am saved you are saved; and just as I expect to get to heaven you expect to get there in the same way. "You are all partakers of my grace." Thus, then, we shall this morning show how such are brought in, and I hope to be able to do so clearly, that there is not one of you, I hope, that is brought savingly into the church that shall not be able, more or less, to read out your experience this morning; and I pray that those that are not brought in may see that they are not brought in, and feel that it is an awful thing to be left without; for those that are without are nominated by all that sin has made them, but those that are brought in are nominated by all that the grace of God and the salvation of God has made them. In the preceding verse you have a description, at least, as I think first, of the mediatorial work of Christ; secondly, of Christian experience; and thirdly, of the resurrection of the body at the last day. It will apply to all these. And therefore, the people, as a church considered, are called a tabernacle, because they are the Lord's dwelling. He dwells in the church as a tabernacle, as his dwelling place; and Christ is the priest of the true tabernacle, this true, spiritual, incorruptible church, which the Lord has pitched, and not man. And therefore, it reads in this way; here is a fourfold description given; it will apply first to the mediatorial work of Christ, but it is on the experimental part that I shall dwell, after first observing that it says! "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David." Of course, David there means Jesus Christ, the tabernacle of Jesus Christ; for the word "David" means "beloved;" Jesus Christ is God's beloved Son, and he is also God's beloved servant, his elect, in whom his soul delights. Now Jesus Christ did by his death mediatorially raise up this people; he did mediatorially, by his atonement and righteousness, make up the breaches thereof; he did by what he achieved raise up the ruins thereof, so that, being thus raised up, they are raised up to be cast down no more forever. But let us come to Christian experience here. "I will raise up the tabernacle of David." And you will observe how beautifully it answers to real Christian experience as we go on from clause to clause. And we must never make light of the work of the Holy Spirit; we must never put ourselves off with a faith that is merely of the creature, and not of God. Now "I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen." So, when a sinner becomes convinced that he is a fallen sinner, now he says my soul is fallen my nature fallen, and I find in the word of God I fell in the first Adam, and that judgment has thereby come upon me, and that death has thereby reigned over me; and thus, I am down beneath everything that God approves, and thus fallen from all hope and help. Now the Lord says, I will raise up such. So, if we are convinced of our being thus fallen, we shall see that we can be raised up above our sins only by the atonement of Jesus Christ, that we can be raised up above the curse only by the atonement of Jesus Christ; so that how true his words become "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" from this fallen state. And again, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" the way in which we are thus raised up. And so, we begin to rise in the way of thought; we begin to think of Jesus Christ; we begin to think of God and his mercy; and we begin to rise in the way of hope; we begin now to have some little hope in God by Jesus Christ. What a mercy for us, yes, it is our salvation that our hope is to be in God by Jesus Christ! We everything

that is bad; he everything that is good; yet our hope is to be in him, and that he will be unto us as the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. And then the next clause, after representing us as fallen and being raised up from that fall by faith in Jesus Christ, and by the hope of his mercy and salvation, then the next clause says, "And close up the breaches thereof." Now, this brings us a little further on. None of us by nature understand how great the breach is which sin has made, and consequently we do not know what is needed in order to close up or make up that breach. But now, most of you, so that I need not, except it be for the sake of some little ones just through the mercy of the Lord inquiring after him, or else, but for such, I need not say much upon this part. Yet it is a very delightful part, too. Take, for instance, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He lived a life of obedience to God's law, and he is the end of the law for righteousness, and his righteousness makes up the breach perceptively, so that the precept has by him been met entirely: And although the law will be ultimately, as is easily shown, fulfilled in the saints, not by them but in them, in that which the Lord constitutes them, yet we will keep to the simple idea that Jesus Christ has met the precept of the law, that he is the end of the law for righteousness, and thus makes up that breach. And as that righteousness is everlasting, and as that righteousness is divine and as that righteousness has in it all the worth of his complex person and therefore, called the righteousness of God; and he called "Jehovah our righteousness" as the breach is thus made up I should wonder when I look at such a righteousness as this, if I did not find some scriptures like the following, namely, that "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." There is no condemnation from which this righteousness is not able to justify us. And again, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." And again "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." And again, "Your peace shall be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea," bringing blessing after blessing, and that to all eternity. Now, this makes up that breach. Let us stop here for a moment and remember, plain as this is to some of you, it is not plain to the professing world at large. They talk of Christ's righteousness, but they are not charmed with it, they are not enraptured with it, they are not carried away with it. And there are nine-tenths of ministers that see not enough, or at least a large number of ministers, I had better not say exactly how many, because I do not know, and so I will not put it in form, well, then, there is a large number of professed Christian ministers who do not see enough in the righteousness of Jesus Christ to preach a whole sermon upon it; they feel at a loss what to say. Why if that is the kind of acquaintance, we have with him it is very poor. There is not a minister that is really taught of God, that knows what it is to be enraptured, and charmed with the wondrous and delightful theme that could not at any time give an hour's discourse upon the mediatorial righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That makes up that breach then so that the law is dead to me, and I am dead to the law; and eternal separation takes place, and Christ's righteousness unites me to God as the God of peace, and thus he becomes our God, and thus we come to the Lord by faith in Christ, by whom we are raised up, and by whom this breach is made up, by the bringing in of his righteousness. I know not what a man would do, or what he would not do, hardly, in gratitude to God for this righteousness. Why, you would have had none of those achievements recorded in the eleventh of the Hebrews, were it not for the gratitude felt in the souls of the ancients to God for such an escape as this from condemnation, and for the imputation unto them of this best robe, this wedding garment, this white array, this imputation unto them of this everlasting righteousness. "Justified by faith;" "To him that works not, but believes in him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Second, the next breach. Justice, including many things in that one, is the curse of the law by the sin of commission, the wrath of God which our sins have lighted up. The dear Savior was made a curse, because all the curses of our sins were embodied in him. He is said to be made sin, because

our sins were laid upon him, and he looked like a mountain of sin in one sense; not that his pure nature could ever be defiled: "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Eternity! None of us can comprehend eternity; and yet there is an eternity of woe to the lost; the fire is not quenched, and the worm dies not. And yet this eternity of woe that sin has entailed upon us Jesus Christ did encompass. Here is a mystery in his sufferings. But then, do not forget one thing, if you seem at all perplexed upon that point, and if you should say, how could it be? We cannot, of course we have no desire to attempt metaphysically to explain it, but we can get a little view of it; we can get something like a reason why he could do it, namely, that he was God, he was God. The church of God, which he "purchased with his own blood." Therefore, being God, he was, at that moment when he was on the cross, he was from eternity to eternity; he compassed eternity; and being eternal he was also infinite, so that he reached beyond our sins. It is true our sins are infinite objectively because they are against an infinite God; well, then, Christ was infinite, to reach to the character of our sins. It is objectively against an infinite God; he could reach to infinity also. He was, and is, and ever must be, omnipotent, so his own omnipotent arm encompassed the whole. All the hell that we had entailed he compassed in himself, and bore all that incarnate God, as Mr. Hart says, could bear:

"Had strength enough, and none to spare."

Some, I know, do not agree with that idea of Mr. Hart's; perhaps, strictly speaking, it may not be true; but I do not know, after all, that we can put it in a better form of speech. If we once set down into a mode of speech in which we have everything out and dried, as soon as ever we become thus tenacious about words, why, we may lay two-thirds of the Bible aside. Who does not know that there is a vast amount of exaggeration in Solomon's Song? But who would take those exaggerations away? They are exaggerations in one sense, but not in another; because, great as the exaggerations are literally, they are not at all exaggerations when taken in their proper meaning, because at the basis of all those apparent exaggerations there is a love that never can be expressed. And so, in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, I believe that there were lengths, and that there were depths, and that there were intensities that the saints of God will never fully comprehend, perhaps to eternity; they shall never be known in perfection until we are stripped of this house of clay and brought into that scene where the spirit is made perfect. Now, then, look at his righteousness, and look at his atoning death; he has thus made up the breach, raised us up from where we were, made up the breaches between us and God; everything is done, all is settled; he has put away sin, and there shall be no more curse; he has swallowed up death in victory. The more we understand these things, and the more our souls mingle with these divine and eternal realities, the godlier we shall be. There is nothing makes you so godly as Jesus Christ and his quickening Spirit; there is nothing makes you so godly as fellowship with him. Hence the disciples, though their understandings were not yet so enlightened as they were afterwards, yet, when the dear Savior spoke of departing from them it filled them with sorrow. They knew that in his absence there could not be that that there was in his presence. And I do not wonder that the apostle Paul, and no man except Jesus Christ himself loved godliness in all its departments more than the apostle Paul, I do not wonder at his saying, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Thus, then, if we are a part of the remnant of the Gentile world, if we are brought rightly in, it will be thus under a sight and sense of our fallen state, of the breaches that sin has made, and that none but such a Person as this could stand in the gap, could make peace between God and man; and, on the other hand, let us have been what we may, if we once discover what he has done we shall indeed see the propriety of the Lord's testimony to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for *you*." So that, if you are despairing, and thinking that there is no hope for you,

and the Lord is pleased to speak to you by Jesus Christ, for remember that grace is by Jesus Christ, that mercy is by Jesus Christ, "My grace is sufficient for *you*," why, then you will rejoice that you are a poor infirm creature, by which the Lord took advantage of your infirmities to make manifest the riches of his grace. Here are two steps; then; first, so to know our fallen state as to see that we are so sunken as to be without hope, and to see Jesus Christ as the only hope; the second step is to see how he has made up the breaches that were made perceptively and penalty, met the precept and endured the penalty. And then mark the third clause, "And I will raise up his ruins." Now, the Christian, the young Christian, when he thus sees how he is to be raised up; when he thus sees how Jesus Christ has made peace by his life and his death, and how God is a God of peace, the young Christian thinks, "Well, I have got everything now." No, there is another clause comes now: "And raise up his ruins". Just now you were merely fallen, that, is all; second, you began to discover the breaches that sin has made, which Christ alone could make up; you see he has made peace: then come the ruins. You're after experience, what will it be? Why, you will be tossed about, and I will tell you one thing you will learn especially, and which seems a great deficiency in the professing world at large, you will learn that you are so enfeebled, and that your heart is so deceitful, and that you are such a poor helpless creature that you have not one of the graces of the Spirit at command, any more than you have heaven at your own command. And you will wonder how it is. The Bible tells us to pray; the Lord will shut your mouth of prayer, and you cannot pray; the Bible tells you to "put on, as the elect of God, holy and loved bowels of mercy." Yet somehow you cannot do it. "Look unto me and be you saved," you cannot do it. "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden;" you go, you cannot. You say, How is it all these exhortations and invitations and expostulations, and I can I do none of them? You try to read the Bible, get nothing; try to hear a minister, get nothing; converse with a Christian friend, get nothing; listen to the hymns, get nothing; the tune is wrong, the clerk does not give them out well, and the minister does not preach well, and all goes wrong together. What a mystery is this! Hereby you learn your utter ruin. And if you have at the time you have this experience, to be hearing a minister that tells you that you must not doubt, and you must not fear, and it is your own fault; if you do not know any better, what torments you undergo! As soon as his sermon is over you will get off home out of sight, and you will feel I cannot; I cannot make it out! and I cannot reconcile my experience with the precepts and exhortations and invitations of the Bible. Yes, you will, after a time; you will come across such scriptures as the following in this experience; "Without me you can do nothing." I never felt that before, Lord, as I do now. "Without me you can do nothing." Bless the Lord, then, that "do nothing" is alluded to, that "do nothing" is noticed. Stop, who did he say that to? Why, to his own disciples, to his own disciples. It was at the last supper, 15th of John; there was the Savior and his disciples with him. "Without me", you that love me and that know me, "Without me you can do nothing." Well, that helps a little. Another scripture says, "The flesh profits nothing." Another says, "It is the Spirit that quickens, and gives to everyone severally as he will." Another scripture says, "It is God that works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Another scripture says, "I am shut up, and cannot come forth." Another scripture says, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise your name." Another scripture says, "You shall whisper out of the dust." Ah, this will make you understand the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and now you will begin to distinguish between the letter of God's word without the Spirit, and the letter with the Spirit. You will find that the paper and the ink, as you hold the Bible in your hand, is without the Spirit of God but a dead letter, and that the Lord alone can put life into it and put life into your soul. These are the steps, then. You will feel this helplessness, the Lord will raise up the tabernacle that is fallen, make up the breaches, and raise up the ruins; but there must be coming to this ruin before you are raised up. And we see how beautifully clause succeeds clause in order. What is the next clause? "And I will build it as in the days of old."

Now, those of you that know what this ruin is, just see how suited the next clause is; “And build it as in the days of old.” Now, how was the tabernacle in the days of old built? Was there a curtain, a bar, a board, a loop, a track, a thread, a single thing, that was left to the device of man? Was not everything done precisely by the wisdom, and goodness, and mercy, and providence of God, independent of the wisdom of man? “See,” said the Lord, “that you make all things according to the pattern shown you in the mount.” “Ah,” says one that knows his ruin, “I see where you are now; I see this ruin binges me to nothing and makes God everything.” That is, it. They did it by the Spirit of God, not by the wisdom of man; no, no; all of it was contrived by the Lord; there was not a single thing left to man. Just as the Lord finished the world before he created Adam, lest Adam should get boasting that he had some hand in it, so here he will stop all our boasting, and make us know that he is all and in all; just as in the days of old God did everything. And is not this the best position that we can be in, for us to be nothing, and for our God to be all and in all? Thus, then, this free-grace church, this tabernacle, raised up into God's order of mercy, the breaches make up, the ruin felt, and yet those ruins raised up by the Lord being all and in all; this was the church that was to possess the remnant of Edom and the Gentiles; this was the church into which the Gentiles were to be brought. I would not occupy your time in pointing out false churches; I think the best way is to dwell for a moment upon the true church. So, then the true church of God, into which all the saved must be brought, are a people who are thus made, by the Spirit of God, sensible of their lost condition, who are thus led to see the awfulness of the breach between them and their Judge; “Your breach is great like the sea;” and that Jesus Christ has made up those breaches, and that we come into reconciliation to God by what he has done. The church of God, then, are those that learn from trying experience that in their flesh dwells no good thing; “In my flesh there is no soundness,” says one. So, the true church then, are a people that are brought entirely to nothing, and that confess, not in mere make believe, not in mere presence, but in reality, that God is their all and in all. And you must observe, which we shall presently notice, that the last clause of our text beautifully accords with the last clause of the preceding verse, “And I will build it as in the days of old;” so that this was entirely of the Lord. So, our experience, if it be of the right kind, will bring us to nothing that God may be all in all. This, then, is the church, and the people that are brought into this church, they are the remnant, I mean the church I am now describing, the true remnant, they that are the Gentiles, “which are called by my name, says the Lord.” So that every man must be joined to the church with propriety, literally, or professedly. “They first gave their own selves unto the Lord.” Is that all, is that all? Yes; “gave their own selves.” What a blessed scripture! Who did they give themselves to? Why, to God. What, were they nothing then? Yes, nothing at all. They gave their own selves.

“Lo! glad I come, and you, blest Lamb,
Shall take me to you as I am
Nothing but sin I you can give:
Nothing but love I shall receive.

And when they were thus given up to God, themselves nothing, and God everything, then “they gave themselves unto us by the will of God.”

Let us look for a moment at *the adoption*; “All the heathen, which are called by my name.” This carries the idea of adoption. What a blessing for us that adoption is by faith! He comes and calls us out of the death we are in, and then, when called out of spiritual death we feel what slaves we are. It is the awakened sinner, and only the awakened sinner, that feels what slavery he is in. Now such a one waits for the adoption. So, if we have this faith, then we have this new name. We are all the

children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. I might trace out some of the names, but hardly dare occupy your time in so doing. In the first place that of sons, they are sons of God, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. Christ is the Son of God, and they are called sons after him. And then, again, they are kings, because Christ is a King; He is the King of Zion. And then, again, they are priests because Christ is a Priest. And then, again, they are called what they never can be in reality, they are called "Jehovah," that is, the name of the bride, "our righteousness." Why, in this adoption, in this oneness, there is an identity between Christ and the church, represented in various ways; bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh; close oneness; yes, represented even by the oneness of the head and the members; so that, as divines have very well said, if a member be oppressed on earth the Head in heaven feels the pain. And so, it is, oneness, "Jehovah our righteousness." What a name is this in which they stand! Sons of God, priests to God, kings, and the king thus his great name, Jehovah our righteousness. Jehovah himself must become unholy, must become unrighteous, must become guilty, must change, and cease to be, before one of these people, as they stand in Christ, can be injured. He is Jehovah their righteousness. Take the word "righteousness," there to include the whole of Christ's mediatorial work. Well, then, before they can be injured, he must be injured; and their sins were laid upon Jehovah, Jesus as the surety, and before a fault can reach them it must first reach him; and then, when it reaches him, he must confess his inability to get rid of it before it can reach them; so that God must cease to be before they can fail. "He could swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself." The Lord help us more and more to understand the greatness of our need of him. I am sure, friends, if the ancients had not seen very clearly into these things, they never would have made so light of this world as they did, and they never could have endured what they did, and they would not have had the zeal that they had; they saw there was something infinite and eternal to be zealous about.

I must now go to my last part; "Says the Lord that does this." As James expresses it in the 15th of the Acts, "The Lord, who does all these things." Just now we showed that everything pertaining to the tabernacle was of divine origin, divine contrivance, and divine provision and it shall be built, this new covenant tabernacle shall be built, as the antitypical tabernacle, the true and lasting one, "as in the days of old." But my text closes by saying, "Says the Lord that does this." Just as the other was of the Lord, so all these things are of God; he has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.

Now if I am thus brought in, as I am, and most of you are too, then what are your prospects? Everything you can desire. First, here is a certainty of plenty; you shall never come to poverty; no. Ah, but I might after the flesh perhaps? Well, it cannot last long; if you do; it can only be for a very little while. And if you are ever so rich, it will not last long. So, it is a very wise prayer, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; but feed me with food convenient for me." But spiritually, as regards the real man, "The mind's the standard of the man," the soul of man, there is eternal plenty. What farmer would not be delighted with a farm that would do what is said in the next verse here? One of the difficulties of an English farmer, as some of you farmers know, is that of the rotation of crops. First, you cannot get them rapidly enough; secondly, before settling what you will sow that field with next year, there is a great deal of trouble to farmers as to the rotation of crops. If they make a mistake in that, they lose the advantages of the farm. And how they would like it also if their farms produced about four crops in the year, or, suppose we say, twelve in the year. Suppose there were a farm to be let in which you could do all that, there would be plenty of people after it. I should like to turn farmer myself, says one. I dare say you would. Well, there is such a farm as that spiritually, friends; the heavenly land is such a land as that. What says the next verse? "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; here is a free- grace farm, then, if I may so

speak, in the heavenly land. As soon as you have got one crop go on ploughing again, sowing again: yes, like a tree of life yielding fruit every month. Millions of souls have been living by the produce of these gospel fields ever since those fields were formed and farmed, and they are as productive as ever. The finest of the wheat is there, the pomegranate is there, figs are there, the vines are there, the pastures are there, the still waters are there. The glorious gospel of the blessed God, we may say of it, as we say of the Savior's atonement,

“Your precious blood shall never lose its power,”

so, we may say,

“Your precious blood shall never lose its power;”

it shall yield us crop after crop, sustenance after sustenance supply after supply. “And all the hills shall melt.” And so, when a drop of gospel wine falls down upon our souls, we forget all our troubles; our souls are strengthened, and we rise and rejoice in that eternal plenty we have in Christ Jesus the Lord. We may go on sowing, bearing precious seed, though we sometimes go forth weeping, sometimes laughing; when we doubt whether we shall get anything, then we must weep over it and there is a promise to such; and when we know we shall get something, we shall laugh over it, that is, go on rejoicing, sowing the seed with full assurance that praying breath shall not be spent in vain. That is one view of the prospect, then, plenty. There was a time when I thought I should soon have no more to say upon these things; whereas now as a general rule, my difficulty is to get time enough to say one half of what I want to say. I have now got in my mind the whole of the 8th and 9th chapters of the Hebrews, and your time is gone before I have even touched them. Bless the Lord, the gospel is a productive field; the Lord help us to plough therein, to sow therein, to reap therefrom.