

THE WAY TO BUY THE BEST GOLD

A SERMON

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“I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich.” Revelation 3:18

THE Savior appears to this church of Laodicea as the Amen. He is called, the Amen, because he answers very beautifully and fully to that verse in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” And Jesus Christ concluded by his work the matter of sin, the matter of the law's demands, of the rights of justice; he concluded all matters, brought them to conclusion, pertaining to the everlasting covenant; and he has brought his people to a conclusion of perfection; and he will bring all the circumstances through which they pass to that conclusion that shall show that nothing has been unnecessary, everything has been permitted in infinite wisdom and loving-kindness, and that all shall come straight at last. He has concluded the whole matter; he is the Amen entirely. “Fear God, and keep his commandments.” This is what Jesus Christ did to a perfection; none other did, or ever will, as long as the world stands. And he kept God's commandments, not for himself, for he owed nothing; but he kept them for others, and has brought in an everlasting righteousness. And this is “the whole duty of man.” Duty signifies a debt, or something we owe; and Christ took the whole of that debit upon himself. He is thus, then, the Amen. And those who know their need of such a person as this, thus to bring the great matters of their salvation to a saving conclusion, will not be cold-hearted toward this great Amen.

Our text, I think, contains three parts. First, *the gold that is tried in the fire*; secondly, *the way in which that gold is to be bought*; thirdly, *the end that is to be answered*, “that you may be rich.”

Now there are two sorts of gold that are tried in the fire, both of which I shall, notice. The first shall be the Lord Jesus Christ himself. “I will make a man,” said the Lord, “more precious than gold, even the gold wedge of Ophir.” Now, then, the dear Savior was tried: we will presently say something upon the way in which he was tried, and how he came off at last uninjured, in a way that proved the reality of his character and proved him to be that pure and precious gold that shall enrich unnumbered millions, and that forever. Now there are several hints in the Old Testament in relation to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first I will take to help me upon this part is

that of the burning bush. When Moses came into the desert there was a bush, a humble shrub, and that bush was on fire. Does not this bush, I think so, from the 33rd of Deuteronomy, “the good will of him that dwelt in the bush;” and where can we learn the good will of God but in Christ Jesus? Does not this bush set forth the man Christ Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the depth of his humiliation, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? And just notice that this bush was in the desert of Sinai, in a very solitary and a very dangerous place; and you will observe, that if so much as a beast touched that sacred mountain he was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart; and that if any had gone near the mountain, the fire of Sinai would have destroyed them. But this bush was not consumed. This astonished Moses. So, the Lord Jesus Christ; the fiery trials he went through could not consume him. The bush was not injured. And so, the dear Savior, he came into a desert place, he came into the desert of Sinai mystically; he came into the desert of sin mystically; he came to where all the curses of the law were; and it is said of him that he was made a curse for us. And if I were to do justice to this part, I should take the whole of the 69th Psalm, and go back and take a large part of the 22nd Psalm; but I must do neither; though I can hardly ever read the 69th Psalm without feeling more or less the endearments of him that suffered such unfathomable depths of woe, and that met that fire which must have been to us unquenchable, yes, a lake burning with fire and brimstone forever and forever. Now, then, I say, this bush had a very humble appearance. So, Jesus Christ in the world, he had a very humble appearance. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Now, then, as this bush was in the desert, so Jesus Christ was in our desert, in the solitary state to which all must come at the last, where grace prevents not. And now, he was not consumed. Let me try and make this matter as clear as I can. Under the Old Testament dispensation, you will find a circumstance occurring every day which was essential to the acceptance of those sacrifices on behalf of the people. You will find in Christ Jesus just the reverse essential to his being acceptable to God. And what was that that was essential in the Old Testament dispensation? It was this, and it is worthy of your serious and careful thought, that the sacrifices that were offered were all consumed. The burnt offering, that was reckoned the greatest offering in the Levitical law, was entirely consumed. This was essential for the acceptance. You will observe that you have not one instance of any one of those sacrifices overcoming the fire; but the fire always overcame them. Hence, when the fire descended upon the sacrifice of Elijah, why, it devoured the sacrifice, the wood, the stones of the altar, licked up the water and the very dust connected therewith, so terrible was that fire that descended upon the sacrifice. They must be consumed in order to be accepted. On the other hand, if Jesus Christ be consumed he is not accepted. The work of those sacrifices was to be consumed; thereby typify the sacrifice, yet thereby demonstrate their own insufficiency. But Jesus Christ must endure Almighty wrath; he must consume that; and if that consumed him, then that same wrath would travel on from him to us, to consume us. He must endure the curse of a violated law, and the indescribable and inapprehensible agonies of death. Think of the agonies of the lost! we think of the agonies that the saved must have been subjected to: all these the Savior endured, and yet he could not be consumed, he could not be overcome. There are volumes, friends, in those words where it is said of Christ, when in the grave, “You will not suffer your holy one to see corruption.” So, then, the bush was not consumed; to typify Jesus Christ, that while the fire consumed the helpless sacrifices, the shadowy sacrifices, for “Lebanon is not sufficient to burn” the fire will still burn on and on; “nor the beasts thereof,” of that mighty forest, “for a burnt offering;” for the fire would still burn on and on. But when Emmanuel comes, God man, this wondrous person, when he steps in, ah, the fire there, as Watts poetically and beautifully expresses it,

“He quenched the Father’s flaming sword,
In his own vital blood.”

He overcame it; and he was the only person that ever did, ever will, or ever can, quench the otherwise unquenchable fire of hell. Look at this Jesus Christ. Ah, if you see your need of such an Emmanuel as this, such a Savior as this, you will see that he is indeed more precious than gold, that he is indeed more precious than the gold wedge of Ophir, that he is indeed better than fine gold, yes, than much fine gold; and you will indeed see, that out of all things you can desire, there is not anything that can be equal unto this wonderful person. Now this bush, then, was in the desert, Christ was in the desert for us; this bush was not consumed. Christ was not consumed. And therefore (for we should look at the truth relatively as well as abstractedly), as he was not consumed, not a particle of his holiness or righteousness consumed; so, at the last, as at the first, the consequence is, that not one that believes in him can be consumed. The more we are led into this truth, of his being our life that cannot die, and of his being that that cannot be consumed, and we cannot be consumed as we stand in oneness with him, if we understood this matter clearly we should smile at the poor worms that wriggle and twist against us as though they had the world at their command, we should smile at all the movements of puny worms, and rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Therefore, one said, “At famine and destruction you shall laugh;” in oneness with Jesus defy the whole. But again, he was in the desert, that is worth thinking over; he was not consumed, though burned, that is worth thinking over; and the place where he was, was holy ground, “Take off your shoes from off your feet, for this place where you stand is holy ground.” Thanks eternal that God has, by Christ Jesus prepared solid ground for us to stand upon; unholy ground is very dangerous, very treacherous, very miry, very boggy; but holy ground is safe ground. Holy ground! so by Christ Jesus, by faith in him, we stand even with all the demands of law and justice. Let us hear what the apostle says of this holy ground: “Being justified by faith” there it is, “we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Be reckoned holy even as Christ is holy. What was there proclaimed from this bush? Salvation. “I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob;” three times the Lord repeats this. “Go and gather the elders of Israel together,” they want a pastoral charge; “and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers” they want instructing, or they will be saying, The Almighty Being, The Benevolent Being, The Parent of all, their own inventions and phrases. “Gather the elders of Israel together,” and tell them that it is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and that I have seen the affliction of my people, and that I have heard their cry, that I know their sorrows, that I am come to deliver them, and deliver them I will. And deliver them he did. And so, my hearer, where do we get salvation but by the fiery sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ? There it is; we can see the God of Abraham; all we want is faith to believe it, and light to understand it, and power to enjoy it; and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. And he knows the afflictions of his people, and he hears their cry, however feeble, and he sees and knows their sorrows, and comes down to deliver them; he will never be weary of this, because he has taken up his eternal abode with them. But let us go on a little farther. Jesus Christ was tried; first, he had a fiery devil to encounter. Oh, with what fierceness did Satan try to get the Savior to substitute the kingdoms of this world for the things of eternity! with what fierceness and eagerness did he try to get the Savior down from the pinnacle of the temple! with what fierceness and eagerness did he try to get the Savior to call in question the veracity of the Bible, to command the stones to be made bread! But this fiery flying serpent

could make no impression adverse upon the Savior. He was tried; but he came off, proved in that, as he did in all other circumstances, the reality of his character. Then, again, he had a fiery world to meet. Oh, how bitter they were against him! I thought, when I first began to enjoy eternal things, that David had more enemies than all the people of God put together besides. I used to think that in those psalms David meant himself. But I have learnt since that those psalms, descriptive of the destructive determination of men apparently to slay David, are in reality towards Christ, belong to him. They were indeed set on fire against him, and that fire was the fire of hell. But oh! how many times have I rejoiced in the thought that they could neither draw him, drive him, nor move him; always full of self-possession; never could be drawn by any of the traps they laid; never could be driven, remained immovable; he never could be moved; that proved the reality of his character. And what shall I say to the next. He had our fiery sins to be tried by. Our sins might be compared, and some divines have done so, and a very good way, too, to fiery flying serpents. What hosts of fiery flying serpents were all met against Christ! Every one of your sins is a fiery flying serpent; they all met their death there; not one could live. And when our sins are called dogs, it is said of them, "Not a dog shall move his tongue against any of the children of Israel." The dear Savior stood it all, bore it all; and by his holiness, his righteousness and atonement, he was the death of every one of those fiery serpents. My sin has not lost its power to be a burden to me; to make me hardhearted, and unbelieving, and fretful; but it has lost its power to condemn me, to make me hate Jesus Christ. It has lost its power; that power it once possessed, in a sense. In the first Adam our sins severed us from God, but in the second Adam there is no separation there. But beyond and above all, he had to endure the fire of God's wrath; called in Deuteronomy a fiery law. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd!" Now it is said of the sword in the garden of Eden, that it was a flaming sword, and that that sword turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. Now if Adam had been determined to reach that tree of life in which he had previously lived, he must do so by encountering the flaming sword. Mark, the sword turned every way. What then? Why, Adam could not reach that tree of life, because the sword would have cut him down; it turned every way, there was no way of escape. Now, then, the sword of justice turned every way against Christ. There was the paradise of God before Christ; there was the tree of peace and plenty planted in the paradise above; there was the joy set before him; but the sword of justice turned every way, and I say it with reverence, yet with truth, that Christ cannot reach that tree of life, only at the cost of his life. There was no other way; it must be by atonement; it must be life for life, eye for eye tooth for tooth, burning for burning, and wound for wound. He must if he will reach the tree of life, and open a way for perishing sinners to come to that tree of life, he himself must encounter the sword. Changing the simile for a moment, we shall have the same doctrine. When the dear Savior sweat under this fiery trial, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, he said, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." Shall we be wrong, for the doctrine is the same, if we put into the place of the word *cup* the word *sword*? "If it be possible, let this sword depart from me; but if not, your will be done." The shepherd must be smitten, the sheep must be scattered, the curse must be endured, and the dear Savior did face the sword, and his life was received for ours; his wondrous person, unconsumed, untouched, uninjured, was received as that one sacrifice by which we are perfected forever. Now this sword was to keep the way of the tree of life; there is no access to it only at the cost of your life. Good deeds cannot reach it; and all you, now, that think you can get to heaven in any way but by this work of Christ, just when your poor body is dying, and your immortal soul, full of hope, full of expectation, on the wing, rises, as John Bunyan says, almost to heaven's gate, the fiery sword meets you, cuts your soul down; down, down, down it goes into the nether regions, damned, damned, damned forever! That must be your lot, as sure as you are a living

man or woman, if you are found anywhere but in the perfection of the Savior's work. But Jesus Christ is the way, and if we are rightly taught we shall come away from where the sword is, away from the law; we shall come to Jesus, and he said, "I am the way;" and we shall have boldness, and welcome, and freedom to enter into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus.

He is that gold that has been tried in the fire; not a particle of dross was ever found about him, he went in pure, he remained pure, he came out pure, and presents his people pure. Oh, what wonders he has wrought! I hope when I come to die, I shall be just where I am this morning in my sentiments, and feelings, and affections, and then I can say with as good authority as Simeon did, "Let your servant depart in peace, my eyes have seen your salvation."

But there is another kind, of gold I must notice; and that is the people of God, they are gold. "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job was tried; he had been tried; he was under trial then. Job, when he was tried, proved to have some dross about him; nevertheless, there was some pure gold in him all that same for that, and you must distinguish between the two. Job's flesh cursed that day of his birth; but Job's faith never cursed the day of his birth. The flesh said, "Cursed be that day in which I was born;" but faith says "Blessed be the day in which I was born!" Oh, what a happy day! I was born from on high; I was born for God; born in the city of Zion; born to die no more; born an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ. And thus, the flesh cursed the day of its birth; but faith blessed the day of its birth. So, again, the language of faith was, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Thus, then, while the old man cursed the day of his birth, the new man blessed the day of its birth. Some of us know what it is thus to look at things after the flesh; we have sometimes everything to cast us down. Now, then, the people of God stand the trial, they abide by the truth, and this proves the reality of their character. Let us have one word upon this from the New Testament: "If need be, you are in heaviness, through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Now it is the last clause I want a word upon, "that your faith may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." I think we generally take that to mean the ultimate appearing of Christ at the last day. I will not, for one moment, exclude that meaning from that Scripture; but I think there is another sense in which it ought to be taken, and that is his present appearance. I will explain it this way: There is a man with the grace of God in his heart, but as yet he has not been much tried; he does not know very much of his own heart; he is of a very legal caste, and likes to say a great many prayers and sing a great many hymns; he is full of external doings, but no internal experience as such yet. He happens to drop into some place where the minister is just setting forth the Lord Jesus Christ and the eternity of his priesthood, and the harmony between the eternity of his priesthood and the immutability of God, and showing that no one has any real religion acceptable to God out of Christ Jesus. And this minister goes upon the certainty of the gospel; and this person says, "I should not like to hear that man; he is very dangerous; he doesn't preach good works enough; he goes too far a great deal; I would not hear him forever so." Off he goes. Now, you see, his faith is not at present found to the praise and glory of God. Presently circumstances go adverse with him; he loses something, or is dreadfully tried in some way or another. He becomes so wretched, and so miserable, and so cast down, and so emptied, and so stripped, that the half-way gospel he has been listening to. Well, now, he says, this used to do, but it won't do now. I can't get on at all. What was that that I made light of the other day? That man, I heard him, he went, I thought, a great deal too far; perhaps I

have not gone far enough. I will go and hear him again; that I will. He goes and hears the minister again; the Lord knows he is coming, prepares the minister for the man and the man for the minister, and the subject for the object, and the object for the subject; the minister just drops into the den where he is, just into the cave where he is; begins to pour in free-grace wine, not wine and water, and free-grace oil; binds up his wounds; takes him up into a place of safety; presents a surety. Oh, bless the man! is this what I thought light of? Oh, since I have had that affliction, that loss, that bereavement, that trial, it has shown me so much of myself, that now these blessed truths are the joy of my heart; this people shall be my people, this God shall be my God, and this Jesus Christ shall be my Jesus Christ. Now the man's faith, after he has been thus tried, proves to turn out to praise and honor and glory. When Christ appears, now in his eternal perfection, that man praises him; when Christ appears, now in all the certainty of his eternal triumphs, that man honors and glorifies him. Now, what do you say some of you that know what trial is? Is it not so? Was there not a time when you were so wrapped up in self that you did not admire Jesus Christ more than yourself, if you did as much? But now self is denounced and despised, Christ is all in all; and now your faith praises him, honors him, and glorifies him in his eternal triumphs. The gold which they buy is God's gospel truth, sworn gospel truth. "Buy the truth, and sell it not." But there would be no pure gospel truth but for what Christ has done, and none will prize pure gospel truth but those that know their need of it. How do you buy it? Well, of course, the first thing is faith; there must be faith. But what is your money? Have you plenty? Oh, plenty, plenty of money. Well, say you, I never heard you say that before. Well, you have now. Now what does your money consist of? Wretchedness, misery, poverty, blindness, and nakedness. Why, that is a curious country. I think, for such coin as that to pass current. It is a fact, sir. If you are wretched, that wretchedness will buy you any promise in the Bible just suited to you. If you feel yourself to be poor and wretched, as worthless and helpless as a worm, that will buy you the very promise in the Bible that meets your case. And miserable. The Lord says, Give me your misery. And what shall I get by it? Why, the golden mercy of God; and that is the way to buy it. In fact, our necessities are the money. So, I have plenty of money, because I have plenty of necessities. Miserable! Lord, have mercy upon me, show me your mercy, be merciful unto me!" And the Lord says, "Go in peace; according to your faith be it unto you." That is the way to buy gold. And blind. Blind? Yes. If you were blind altogether, you would not see your sins; but you see your sins, but yet do not see Jesus Christ as the Son of God. "Everyone that sees the Son." Such a one says "Well, I do see that Jesus is the Son of God, but I cannot see my interest in him." "What will you?" "That my eyes might be opened to see my name in life's fair book set down." That will buy that. And poor. What shall I buy with that? Why, a golden kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And naked. What shall I buy with that? Why, robes of immortality. When a poor sinner is stripped, nothing in which to appear of which he is not ashamed, that is the man that becomes the object of the Savior's attention. 58th of Isaiah, "When you see the naked", not when the naked see you, mind: no; "when you see the naked, that you cover him." So, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." Well, now, I will illustrate this matter of buying God's truth in all its adaptability to our innumerable necessities, by the case of Joseph. How did Joseph's brethren buy? They did not understand this doctrine yet; they brought some money. If I had been there, with the knowledge I now have, I should have said, What's this money for? Why, to buy corn. Ah! you may depend upon it, Joseph won't have your money, he will not take a penny. Well, what should we take, then? Why, empty sacks, as big as you like, and as many as you like. Your necessities will buy the corn, whenever he sees and knows you are starved out; your poverty shall buy the corn. Well, then, just as they were coming away, one turns around and says, "Ah, brother James, you see you were

wrong; he has taken our money. I knew you high doctrine people went too far, and made it out better than it is. See, he has taken our money.” “I do not believe that he has.” “Ah, but he has.” Presently, “What is that rattling in the sack?” “Why, it’s my money.” “What is that in your sack?” “My money.” “What is that in your sack?” “My money.” “Why, you have all got your money back again.” Why, brother James is right, after all.” Of course, he is: the gospel scorns conditions. “I will nourish you and your little ones.” He will give you as much as you need, and take care of you. So, it is our necessities that are the money then. And where is there a Christian man in this sense that has not plenty of money The same doctrine is contained in the 1st verse of the 55th of Isaiah, “Ho, every one that thirsts.” there is the necessity, “come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Then you have the same doctrine also in the pearl of great price. You say, I think not, because he spent all that he had. Well, so you must get rid of all your righteousness and all your goodness, and become poorer than Job, if possible; you must become spiritually poor, and then Christ will be your pearl of great price. But there are some elements lying under all this. We should not be able to obtain the promises of the gospel; we should not be able to buy this golden gospel without the underlying elements that I hastily proceed to notice. First, those who came to Joseph were his brethren: he took money, and horses, and everything else from the Egyptians, but took nothing of his brethren. So, just so sure as you are poor enough to need Jesus Christ in what he really is, you are one of his brethren, and he is not ashamed to call you brethren. The second underlying element is that of love. Joseph never hated his brethren, though they had hated him. So, Christ never hated us, though, alas! alas! we have hated him. “Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end.” The third underlying element was the will of God. Joseph understood his mission; “You sold me, but God sent me.” So, Jesus Christ, the good will of God. Thus, the underlying elements of our being brought to Christ are covenant relationship, everlasting love, and the good will of God.

Now lastly, *the end that is to be answered*; “that you may be rich.” I take a fivefold view of these riches. First, redemption-ally, gold emancipates the slave; and we are emancipated or delivered by the highest kind of gold, by that that infinitely surpasses gold. It is therefore that kind of treasure that sets us free. Secondly, supplies all our needs by the way; for by the promises of God we have at command, as it were, all that we need. Third, that these riches, the truths of the gospel, are durable riches. Fourth, it is impossible to lose them. And fifth, that the people will never lose their capacity to enjoy them. I know a considerable number of people in this world upon whom Providence has heaped great riches, but they are obliged to live in a way that the greatest poverty would compel them to live. For instance, a man is so poor that he cannot afford to have any sugar in his tea, cannot afford a cup of tea scarcely, obliged to make the old tea leaves do four or five times, and so on; lives very hard. Now I know some rich people are obliged to live just like that; just as poor, though they have plenty of money; they are incapable of enjoying their riches. But here, in these spiritual riches, no incapacity will ever arise; we shall be capable to all eternity of living most luxuriously.

May the Lord then enrich us with those riches which are indeed durable; his alone the glory, ourselves made eternally happy.