

# A KIND COMMAND

## A SERMON

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“And reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord.” Leviticus 26:2

TRUE religion always begins with the grace of reverence for God. Whatever varieties there may be in other respects in the manifestation at the beginning of a work of grace in the heart, this grace is sure to be there. Whether such an one be brought without having at present either any deep conviction of sin or any very trembling apprehension of the majesty of God's law and the terribleness of his wrath, there is sure to be a reverence for the name of the Lord, for the ways of the Lord, and for the things pertaining to God. Let the work begin how it may, such an one at least ceases to be a trifler, and begins to feel that, after all, matters pertaining to eternity infinitely outweigh everything else. They may therefore well be called “the weighty matters of faith, judgment, and mercy.” The Lord brings all that he intends to save into this deep reverence for him in that order of things by which we are saved. Our text refers especially to the order in which he is to be revered; and the great enemy of our souls well knows that reverence for God, in God's own order of things, is the first and essential grace of the Spirit, including every other. While some other graces of the Spirit may cease, this will never cease. To all eternity the soul will feel deep reverence for God to be its very element. Now, I say, Satan knows this, and has never attempted to deny it; but he has sought to pervert it, and most awfully succeeded in doing so. Hence comes the reverence that has been shown for religions of human invention, for images, and ten thousand other things. The Lord in the very first verse of this chapter prohibits all idols and images, or bowing down to them. He does not say worshipping them, but bowing down to them; just reminding us that all reverence that is not after that order which he himself has commanded is vain. Thus, we read that their fear towards him and their worship of him are vain, because, they are led, not by the testimonies of God, but by the traditions of men.

I shall, then, this morning take, as concisely as I can, a fourfold view off our text. First, *God in Christ as in heaven*. Secondly, *God in Christ as in Solomon's temple*. Thirdly, *God in Christ as with his people in the world*. Fourthly and lastly, *God in Christ as in his earthly sanctuary*.

First, then, *God in Christ as in heaven*. “You shall reverence my sanctuary.” Now we shall be right in saying that Jesus Christ is God's sanctuary. And as Jesus Christ is the glory of heaven, that is, it is by Jesus Christ that our God will appear to us in heaven, and be the glory therein, therefore

it is that heaven itself is called a sanctuary, as we shall presently see; after I have just observed that it is a great thing to have a deep reverence for God in relation to heaven. We cannot see at present, only through a glass darkly, what a heaven he has provided for us. It may well be written in one scripture, that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him;” and “we know only in part; but when that which is in part is done away, then that which is perfect shall come.” Now some of the ancient prophets, and also some of the apostles, who were made the most acquainted with the heaven that God had prepared for his people, they respected that heaven the most; they felt the deepest filial and solemn reverence for God in his wondrous love in providing such a heaven. Let us hear the word of the Lord on this subject. The 102nd Psalm gives us a beautiful representation of this, heaven being there called a sanctuary. But we must notice some of the things with which the word “sanctuary” in the 102nd Psalm stands connected. It first stands connected with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for it says in that Psalm, “When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.” Now what was the glory of God the Father? Why, it was to send us his beloved Son, that by him he might reconcile us to himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us, but imputing them unto his dear Son, and that Jesus Christ has put them away. And what was the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? Why, his glory was this: he says, “My meat is to do his will, and to finish his work.” His work was, his glory was, his delight was, to do the will of God; his glory was to establish that victory and that eternal perfection that he had come to achieve. And what is the glory of the Holy Spirit? Why, the glory or the delight of the Holy Spirit is to take of the words of Christ, called things, because they are not mere words, but words of life and mercy, to take of those words, and show unto the people what Jesus Christ has done. Now then, “When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.” Here is a sinner brought down into the dust, and his soul filled with that deep and solemn reverence felt by the publican when he breathed out, in deep reverence and solemnity, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Now if God the Father raise you up, it will be by giving you faith in Jesus Christ; if Jesus Christ raise you up, it will be by giving you faith in what he has done, that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him; and if this Holy Spirit raise you up, it will be thus, in the same way, “You are complete in him;” that declaration brought in constitutes God’s glory, will constitute your safety, protection, and eternal blessedness; and that one declaration puts a negative upon everything that stands against you. The prophet goes on, and comes to the subject of our text. He says, “He will regard the prayer of the destitute.” This is worthy of observation, that here is his glory, when he shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory, solely by the perfection of the work of his dear Son. And then comes in a description of the people that see this glory, and that will be heard and answered. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute.” Only think, if you come before him with some holiness of your own, some righteousness of your own, some goodness of your own, and some wisdom of your own, he will not hear you. But if you come before him with nothing but sin of your own, nothing but unrighteousness of your own, nothing but evil of your own; if you come before him and plead his righteousness, and his righteousness only; his atonement, and his atonement only; his promise, and his promise only, then he will hear you. He will not hear the Pharisee, however little a Pharisee you may be; but he will hear the destitute, the prayer of the destitute. It is said in the 13th of Leviticus, of the leper, that when he was a leper all over, and there was not a free spot about the man, but an entire leper, and nothing but a leper, the priest was to pronounce him clean. And when we meet with a poor sinner thus utterly destitute, feeling and seeing there is no remedy but the precious blood of Christ, and so destitute, his prayer is real, he will be heard, he will be cleansed; we may pronounce him clean, for if he has not yet experienced the cleansing, still such never were lost and never will he, for

“blessed are the poor in spirit: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” But before leaving this point I do not mind digressing for a moment. Some people are not great Pharisees, and they think, because they are not great Pharisees, that they will not be rejected. But the Lord rejects little Pharisees as well as great ones. You may not be a law Pharisee, and you may not be Pharisee enough to deny election, or to deny that salvation is of grace; you may not be Pharisee enough perhaps to deny that there is completeness in Christ; you may not be Pharisee enough for this; but you may be Pharisee enough to hold that it is your duty to believe savingly in Christ and come to Christ; and you can if you like. You may be Pharisee enough to be ignorant of the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and take a great part of his work into your hands, and suppose you can help it forward. So you are not a law Pharisee, and you are not a great Pharisee, but you are a little Pharisee, and being a little Pharisee you will be no more accepted than a great Pharisee, because you set aside God’s order in part; and if you set it aside in part, he that thus offends in one part of the gospel offends in the whole. You cannot set aside a tache or a loop of this divine tabernacle without disarranging the whole. So then beware, for though you may not be a law Pharisee, nor a great Pharisee, yet if you are a little fox, why, you are no more a sheep than if you were a great fox; and if you are a little Pharisee you are no more a true believer than as though you were a great Pharisee. You must be brought down, you must be humbled, you must be convinced that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.” God is to be revered in what Jesus Christ is; that is the order after which he is to be revered. Hence in the parable given by the Savior the man is set forth as saying, “They will reverence my son.” But they did not reverence God’s Son; they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and yet supposed all the time that they were God’s people. But they were not God’s people; they were false servants, and dying in that state must have their portion with Satan. So, then, it is the will of the Father that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Oh, what reverence shall we have for Immanuel in what he has done! What reverence shall we have for God in this beautiful order of things! for here the Lord out of Zion in the perfection of beauty has shined. Then he gives us another version descriptive of these people. “For he has looked down from the height of his sanctuary” heaven called a sanctuary, “from heaven”, there is the explanation. So, then, heaven is that sanctuary, and “sanctuary” means “a holy place;” heaven is that holy place where sin no more defiles; heaven is that sanctuary, that holy place, where we are to dwell forever; “From heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning” some of us know what it is to be afraid to pray; some of us know what it is to fear to lift up our eyes to heaven; some of us know what it is to stand afar off, and, as it were, smite upon our breasts and say, “Alas! alas I woe is me, for I am undone.” Some of us know what it is to fear that we never did pray; some of us know what it is to be as a pelican of the wilderness, as an owl of the desert, or as a sparrow alone upon the house-top; and we sigh, and mourn, and wish secretly we had never existed, not thinking that we are all the time praying. “To hear the groaning of the prisoner.” There is the soul shut up in its own sin, in its own trouble, in its own clouds of darkness; shut up, perhaps, in addition to this by circumstances, and like a poor prisoner he seems chained every way; his chain is heavy, and he seems as though he were bound hand and foot, can neither walk nor work. There he is, a poor groaning creature. “To hear the groaning of the prisoner.” It was the very mission of Christ to open the prison-house of them that are bound. But then suppose we are ignorant; suppose we know nothing of this house of mourning, suppose we know nothing of this imprisonment, suppose we know nothing of that prayer of David, “Bring my soul out of prison, and I will praise your name.” Now, “to loose those that are appointed to death.” According to our

sin we are appointed to death; and very often, according to our fears, we are appointed to death. "The fears of hell got hold upon me; the sorrows of death compassed me about." My hope is gone, and I shall be lost. In our own apprehension, therefore, appointed unto death. But the Lord lets loose the prisoners; he comes in his own time. "As for you, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Then it is, "Loose him, and let him go." And what are they to do when they are loosed? Why, "to declare the name of the Lord in Zion." Not their own name; not to declare what wonderful things they have done; but to declare what wonderful things the Lord has done. "To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord." The kingdoms there refer literally to the tribes of Israel when they were gathered together to the Passover. And so, you will praise the Lord for him that is your Passover, by whom you have escaped the angel of death. Then they were gathered together at the first-fruits, and so you will praise the Lord that Jesus Christ is the first-fruits, and that your acceptance of God is by him. And they were gathered together at the feast of tabernacles, the feast of plenty; and so you will praise the Lord that now you are thus made free you are to eat in plenty, and to be satisfied, so satisfied that, like the prodigal, you will never wish to leave your Father's house again. "They shall eat and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of the Lord their God, that has dealt wondrously with them; and my people shall never be ashamed." Now, without going any further, is there not something here, in this department, that gives force to our text? "You shall reverence my sanctuary" you shall reverence my order of things; you shall reverence me by my order of things. Can any order of things be more suitable? See the glory of the Lord in the perfect work of Christ; see the persons whose cause he undertook, namely, the destitute; see how kindly he answers them, and see that this is written for the generation to come, and the people that shall be created, that is, created in Christ Jesus, and thus praise the Lord. And then, again, poor prisoners, shut up as we are, and but for his grace must be shut up for ever in hell, and therefore not unto us, but unto his name be all the glory for any hope we have of interest in this wondrous heaven, this wondrous sanctuary, that sanctuary not made with hands, eternal and on high. There is no doubt we all have quite as much respect and quite as much reverence for this world as is needed, but if we are in our right minds we shall pray to the Lord to give us to have more reverence and more respect to the unseen world, to that world that is so glorious that angels were not capable of taking it into their hands, "Unto the angels has he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." What light, what joys are at this moment those of our departed brothers and sisters that have been lately taken from us I know not. To see him, to be with him, and to be there in a fulness of glory, free from sin and free from death, free from pain and free from care, free from darkness, every enemy gone, and gone forever, what must it be to be in his presence? We can say nothing more than that which is said by the psalmist, "fulness of joy in his presence, and pleasures," without a plague mingled therewith, without a pain connected therewith, "pleasures for evermore at his right hand."

But, secondly, we notice, *God in Christ as typified in Solomon's temple*. Upon this point I might say much, but I will say but little. The temple was a kind of localization of God. He was pleased to localize himself, to choose a place where he would become visible to his people, where he could commune as a friend communes with his friend; where he could speak to them in accents of mercy and of loving kindness. Hence there was the mercy-seat, all pure gold, perhaps to set forth the purity of the motives, movements, and purposes of the Most High, as well as the preciousness thereof. Thus, localizing himself that the people might know which way to look, where to look, what to look at, and after what order. Hence, as you know, one who in his rebellion ran away from

the Lord, when he was in the sea, in the whale's belly, he knew no creature could hear him cry. In vain, when he was in that position, was it for him to cry to man; man could not hear him; and if he could, he could not help him. "I am cast out of your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple." And he did not look in vain. And so, we see in Solomon's prayer, under all circumstances they were to look to this temple, where the sacrifice was. And what a significant truth is that, that one, and only that one will I name, "When your people are put to the worst before the enemy." Now I will leave you to think of those words. There is hardly anything to which they shall not apply. Everything almost, I was going to say, is an enemy to the soul. And when you are put to the worse before your enemies, whether the evils of your nature, or affliction of body, or circumstances, or slander and reproach, let it be whatever it may, when you are put to the worse you must all experience this. It is mortifying at times, and rather trying; but then, if it makes us feel that we have nowhere to look to but to the Lord, why, it will bring us to the conclusion of one who was in this state, put to the worst, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." But then Solomon's temple, while God was to be revered after that order, that was but a temporary localization. Yet even that temporary localization was to be revered. And the human nature of Jesus Christ is the localization of Deity. There God has localized himself; there he has concentrated himself; there he may be seen, "He that has seen the Son has seen the Father;" there he can be communed with, there he can be dwelt with. "If a man loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. Hence it is, you that are Christians, what deep reverence you feel for Christ as man! How you admire his life, how you admire his miracles, how you admire his wondrous discourses, and how you admire him in his wondrous death, in his resurrection, in his return to his disciples, and in his ascension to heaven, and on the throne, and in his expected, and indeed in his sure reappearance! for he shall come by-and- bye without sin unto eternal salvation. And I have often remarked, and I will remark it again, it is worthy of observation that the disciples had their infirmities like the rest of us, as we see, yet you never find a single instance of one disciple answering him rudely. I have often admired that, very much admired it. Even when the dear Savior spoke of his approaching sufferings and death, Peter did not say it rudely when he said, "Far be it from you; you shalt not suffer such things." And so, in all the questions they put to him, and the answers they gave, there was nothing rude, nothing daring, nothing presumptuous. So far from that, that when they discovered that he knew what they had been talking about by the way, they were ashamed.

But see how they revered him. Time would fail me to dwell upon the many instances of this. I mention this just to show that the same feeling still lives in the church of the living God. We cannot, any of us, endure a word said slightly of Jesus Christ as man. That awful doctrine that some have been so left to Satan as to advocate, that Jesus Christ as man had sin in his nature, that he was liable to sin, that he was peccable, that it was possible for him to sin, oh, how our souls recoil at the very thought! They might as well tell us that Deity had sin in it as to tell us the human nature of Christ had sin in it, or that there was any possibility of his sinning; because he was God as well as man. But again: we are therefore to reverence Christ as the way to heaven; we are to reverence him as the way to God, and reverence God in Christ as in heaven, and reverence our God in Christ as the way of access to him. When put to the worst, look at it. In what a great variety of respects this is true! and yet there is always a remedy, because is anything too hard for the Lord?

I notice, thirdly, *God in Christ as with his people in the wilderness*: taking the wilderness to mean the world. This is what the world does not understand. And we ourselves are not quite so well versed in this as we could wish. If the Lord places some of you in the world where you would not be placed, he places himself with you. Ah, say you, if I saw that, I should not mind it so much. It is so, whether you can see it or not. You cannot always be placed just where you would. One may be saying, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech!" Well, but the Lord is sojourning with you there. "Woe is me, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Well, but the Lord is dwelling with you there. "My soul has long dwelt with him that hate peace;" that is, that hates the gospel. Well, but the Lord is with you there. Let us hear what is said about this; and I should like you to understand very clearly what I am going to say, because the scripture that I am going to quote now is a very instructive one. 11th of Ezekiel: "Son of man," said the Lord to the prophet, "your brethren, even your brethren, the men of your kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly." And whom do you think this double description belongs to, "all the house of Israel wholly"? Does that mean all the Jews? No. Or the Gentiles? No. "All the house of Israel wholly" there meant only those that were believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; only those who were brought to revere God in his new covenant order of things. "All the house of Israel wholly", are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem," so then here is all the house of Israel wholly, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are named separately. So, then the inhabitants of Jerusalem formed no part of what are there called "all the house of Israel wholly." "Are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession." Why, if you were to study for seven years, you could not get a more succinct, concise, expressive, and clear representation of Popery than you have there. What is the language of Popery? Get you far from the Bible. You are not capable of understanding it. Unto us is the Bible given, and we will give you some of it, and some of our own with it, just as we please. Get you far from such holy things, and you must have what we please to give you. That is what they said then, and that is what they say now. And what is Puseyism but the smoke of hell? So is Popery the smoke of hell. But what is the answer of the Lord concerning these few people, "all the house of Israel wholly"? Do you not see something more here? The others had been saying, Then, if we are not what you call born of God, we cannot be Christians. No. Then if we do not agree with your prophet Ezekiel in his 37th chapter, where he describes the everlasting covenant, we do not belong to God. No. So that they brought enmity upon themselves, the same as we do, by advocating God's truth in its vitality and power. "You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." What then is the message to these few that are to the Lord "all the house of Israel wholly", for the others are nothing? "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." And then the Lord goes on to promise to give them the land of Israel, that is, the new covenant land, the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away. Just go to Babylon; was not the Lord as good as his word? See the prayer meeting of the four total abstainers, Daniel and his fellows; see their earnest appeal to God; see the wondrous interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, wherein the kingdom of the dear Redeemer is set forth in its durability in contrast to the temporary and limited character of other kingdoms. Ah, what a reverence was there for Christ, the sanctuary of the blessed God! See the three worthies in the furnace. See how the Lord quenched the violence of fire there; and Christ was the sanctuary there. See Daniel in the lions' den; that while Gad was overcome, he overcame at the last. See Mordecai in Persia. And many more instances might be named. See how faithful the Lord is. "I will be as a little sanctuary." You that love his name and revere him, never think you are out of his reach, or out of his sight, or out of his mercy, or out of

his truth. "I am with you in all places." "I am with you," he said unto the disciples, "always, even unto the end of the world." Ah, said the Babylonians, we can do as we please with these captives now we have got them away from their God. Their God is in Judea; their God is in Canaan: we have spoiled the city of their God, and the house of their God, and the land of their God, and the people, and their God is not here. They thought he was like their own gods, I suppose, limited to a certain place. But how astounded they were when they found the God of Daniel was there! Ah, says Belshazzar, their God is not here; we will make sport of him; we will take the holy vessels, and make sport of him: the same as some professors now make sport of God's truth. What is that handwriting on the wall, Belshazzar? Oh, my magicians and soothsayers can soon read that. Can they? Trust me if they can. And they could not. But Daniel comes in and reads it, and tells out the doom of Belshazzar. The monarch's lips quivered, his knees smote together, he trembled from top to toe; and that night was Belshazzar slain. Verily there is a God that judges in the earth; verily by him actions are weighed. "You shall reverence my sanctuary."

Lastly, *God in Christ as in his earthly sanctuary*. We are to reverence that. Well, say you, you are not going to tell us there is any holiness in the sanctuary. Well, there was no holiness in the materials of which Solomon's temple was made, or unholiness either; because things inanimate are not capable of either holiness or unholiness. That temple was not called holy because there was any holiness in the materials, but it was called a holy temple for two reasons; first, because it was put to a holy use; and secondly, because of the presence of God therein. So, our earthly sanctuary. This house, there is no holiness or unholiness in the materials, but it is put to a holy use. And I trust some of you can say, short as the time is since the Lord enabled us to open this sanctuary, that you have at times enjoyed his presence. Now, then, we are to reverence the sanctuary of God. First, by encouraging assembling together. That is one thing. I say not this as though I had reason to complain in this respect. It is a divine, and a gracious ordinance, that of preaching the gospel. Look back at the times when those who have gone before us would indeed have shouted for joy to have the privilege, we now have of thus assembling in peace, and without the fear of persecution. And also, by being as punctual to the time of service as possible. I do not know that I have any complaint to make to you upon this, because I am fully aware of many difficulties. I am fully aware that some of you are so placed that perhaps you do not get to rest till twelve or one o'clock, perhaps later than that, some of you\$ and how you get here at all I hardly know, but you do manage it. It must be hard work. It is pleasant to see you here in time as much as possible; but I wish to deal delicately with that: because if you cannot come here till half an hour after the service has begun, I would rather you should come then than not come at all; and even if you could not come here until a quarter of aa hour before the service closes, even then, so long as you keep quiet, and do not move about so aa to disturb the people, I should be glad to see you. Still, I think you will be as punctual as possible. I do think this is one part of revering the sanctuary. Again, our behavior in the house of God also ought to be as becomes the place. It is the place of God's special presence; he has promised to be there. Therefore, when people go into the sanctuary, and sit down and talk as though they were in a railway carriage or in a public-house taproom, that is not reverence, that is not right; that is making the place common, that is profaning it. I am sure all of you must have observed how little it is, a very little folly, that will make common the public worship of God. As you enter the chapel, you ought everyone to feel that it is the place where God's special promise of his special presence is, and therefore you ought to enter accordingly. In some places they wear their hats all the way down the aisle before they take them off. That is not right; it looks profane, it looks infidel, it looks bad. You shall "reverence my sanctuary." The better our behavior the more

sacred the place seems, and the more solemn and the more profitable. Only think: now, if one or two were to stand up and speak while I am addressing you, how it would spoil everything, take away all reverence, all solemnity, and everything that we come to realize from the presence of the blessed God. Also, there are some in some places of worship whose behavior in other respects is very bad. I shall be plain: sit in the pew, and keep spitting all the time. Others perhaps throw nutshells down, or something or other. And go around after the people have gone away, had not that man a handkerchief with him? Had not that woman a handkerchief with her? What! so despise the house of God! Now I do not know whether there may be any here of that sort; if there be, the pew must be marked, the person must be found out, and he must either desist or give up his sitting. I am sure the deacons would be simply carrying out the wishes and feelings of the congregation in so doing. The place must be kept respectable, and if you are not respectable in your house, you must be so here, or else we will make you so. We must not have the sanctuary of the Lord made common and profaned. Now as regards the behavior of the people while hearing, I myself do not see, and never could, any violation of reverence when a smile of admiration or of approbation may be perhaps excited. A minister may give a very pointed turn to some knotty subject he has in hand, and the people are exceedingly pleased. There is a smile, perhaps that smile can be heard; but it is a smile of sacred approbation, it is a smile of holy sentiment; and I can see no more harm in that than in a sigh. We do not come to be like statues, no. Let everyone desire to be attentive; let everyone pray that he may be attentive; let everyone desire to profit solemnly and cheerfully, and cheerfully and solemnly. I should be very sorry so to preach as to think it a sin to be cheerful. I desire to preach with the feelings that God gives me; and if he give me at one time feelings that make my soul move like the hind on the mountains, and intensely cheerful, which some have called lightness, I have felt no lightness, in it; and that those who have heard, their souls, ere they were aware, have made them like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, there is no harm, no sin, no irreverence in that. On the other hand, if my soul be let down into deep solemnity, none of that cheerfulness which I may feel at other times, then I will go as I am led. So then let us treat the place as the house of God, and do not do that in this house that you would not do if the Savior were personally present, for in reality he is. Now as to the dust on the floor, that was always a pleasing sight to me. I daresay the chapel-keeper may look upon it with rather a grievous countenance, looking at it up-stairs and down-stairs in a large place like this. But when I come into the chapel on a Monday, after you have gone, the dust has much pleased me. I have thought, of that scripture, "And favor the dust thereof."