

OFFENCES AND THE REMEDY

A SERMON

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“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Romans 4:25

THE apostle in contrasting the mercy of God with the wrath of God, contrasting our woefully degraded state with that state into which the grace of God can and will exalt us, well said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. This is one reason why he would glory in the gospel of Christ, because God is in that gospel, and on its side in his eternal power. “Trust you,” is the gospel language, “in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Another reason he assigns is, because there is a progressive revelation in this gospel of the work of Jesus Christ, as able to meet our necessities; “for therein is revealed the righteousness of God,” meaning of course the gospel righteousness of God, the righteousness the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought out, “therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith, from one degree of faith to another.” So that if I have something extraordinary to try my faith, then Jesus righteousness shall be revealed afresh, proving the declaration, “My grace is sufficient for you.” This is another reason why he would glory in the gospel of Christ. Another reason suggested is that our continued life with God is by the same gospel, and faith in Jesus Christ; “the just shall live by faith.” Then he brings in the ponderous and the solemn testimony that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” And there is not a man, there is not a woman, under the heavens, while in a state of nature, that does not hold the truth in unrighteousness, if they hold it at all. If they hold the Bible to be true, they do not hold it so righteously, for they that are in the flesh cannot please God; they have not that knowledge, and they have not that faith that enables them rightly to hold God's truth, and therefore not holding it rightly they hold it wrongly; and thus everyone in a state of nature holds the truth in unrighteousness; and the wrath of God being revealed against such is thereby revealed against all. Here, then, the apostle begins, as it were, to make way for the great theme of our text, that “he,” Jesus Christ, “was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.”

The text, you will perceive, divides itself into two parts. We first notice *the substitution*; “he was delivered for our offences:” and then, secondly, *the justification*; “and he was raised again for our justification.”

I will first point out as carefully as I can our offences apart from Jesus Christ, and then we will look at those offences in oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ. I will first, then, notice our offences, and unless we are clear in this department, in the knowledge of our offences, we shall not appreciate the mercy of God, nor the Christ of God, nor anything indeed that pertains to our eternal welfare, unless we are divinely taught, and made to see and feel what those offences are. And as the apostle in the preceding chapter gives a very distinct summary of these offences, I do not think I can do better than follow the apostle, because he gives that kind of summary of our offences which he intends as applicable unto all men, so that not one of this assembly this morning shall be able to say, “That is not me;” but each shall be led to see more or less that it does apply unto all, that there is no exception, no difference; “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Let us, then, look at the offences. “There is none righteous; no, not one.” Now “the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” That is one offence, then, of which we are all partakers by the fall of man, and in our hearts; and while we are out of square with the justice of God; “there is none righteous; no, not one.” And there is a solemn writing over, as it were, the very gates of death, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.” The second is that “there is none that understands.” “It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that formed them will show them no favor.” And besides, if we have not, which we have not by nature, any true understanding of God’s truth, then we must be reckoned among the dead; for “he that wanders,” as we all by nature do, “out of the way of understanding, shall remain in the congregation of the dead.” The third is that “there is none that seeks after God;” and if we do not seek after God, which none of us truly do while in a state of nature, then we must be reckoned among the wicked; and “the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek God.” The fourth is, that “they are all gone out of the way;” out of the way of that holiness and righteousness and perfection in which we were created; if we thus remain out of the way we must be dealt with as unclean, we must be dealt with as enemies to the Lord, and the Lord will say to us when we come to die, “Depart from me; I never knew you.” You were out of the way; had you been in the way I should have known you, but you were out of the way. Then the next is, “They are together become unprofitable.” There is not anything the natural man can do by which he can do any good to his soul. Hence all the ceremonies, and all the strivings, and all the hard workings of man can bring no good to the soul. Altogether unprofitable. What! Saul of Tarsus would say, before he had light to see this; what! a Hebrew of the Hebrews, circumcised the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, touching the law blameless, belonging to the strictest sect, and having followed up everything as conscientiously as an angel could do, and yet not profitable! But when that man, Saul of Tarsus, was convinced of his state, he was then led to see that that which he thought profited him was all loss, and he was glad to cast the whole of it away. Well, then, if we are found in this unprofitable, this unregenerate state, what will be the language? “Cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” And another offence is that “there is none that does good, no, not one.” And yet none can come forth to the resurrection of eternal life but they that have done good, and that good we shall have presently to show. If, therefore, we have done no good, then we shall be reckoned evil figs, as represented in the 21th of Jeremiah; there were the good figs and the evil figs, and the evil figs were to be, as you are aware, subjected to destruction; and so “there is none that does good, no, not one.” The next is that “their throat is an open sepulcher.” The carnal mind

is the receptacle of everything that is deadly. Is it not frightful, when we look at the profligacy of the world, and then look at the false doctrines of the world, to see what men receive into their minds, and to see what they are delighted with? "Their throat is an open sepulcher." The Lord looks into the heart. And of course Saul of Tarsus, if we may again refer to him, he would be ready to say, Well, I must be an exception to that rule, for if the Lord looks into my heart, such a good creature as I am, he will not find anything sepulchral there, he will not find anything deadly there. That would be the conclusion to which the Pharisee in the temple would come, and, to which Saul of Tarsus would come before he was taught of God. But what is his testimony when the law takes hold of him? Ah, he says, "it wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." He then discovered that in his flesh dwelt no good thing. He looked up with streaming eyes and trembling heart, Lord, it is true; my throat by nature is an open sepulcher, the receptacle of everything infinitely offensive to your holiness and justice. Then, again, "With their tongues they have used deceit." There is not a man under the sun that has not used deceit in relation to his own soul. I will pass by mere natural things, the natural temperament or tendency of men, and will keep to that for which we are gathered together this morning, that which is vitally essential. Now, then, "with their tongues they have used deceit." There is not a man or woman under the sun that has not dealt with his or her own soul deceitfully. I know I did when I was in a state of nature, and I feel it now one, one among the many privileges I have, one of the highest, to be made honest with my own soul, to deal honestly with my own soul, to entreat the Lord to let me know the worst of myself, and to preserve me from being by my deceitful heart deceived. Now, then, "what shall be given unto you, or what shall be done unto you, you false tongue?" deceiving your precious soul, putting off your precious soul, and in every way hushing to silence your own immortal soul, what shall be done unto you? "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper," shall forever, dying in that state, be your portion. Then, again, "The poison of asps is under their lips," to denote their oneness with the old serpent, the great poisoner of the human race. He it was that first poisoned the mind of man against God, and does he not now poison the minds of men against God's truth, and God's people, and God's ministers? "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched", might read with equal propriety, who has poisoned "your minds?" Your minds have become poisoned against the truth that I have preached unto you, when I bear you record that you would have plucked out your eyes for me a little time ago, when you seemed to run well in the letter of the doctrine, and am I now become your enemy because I tell you the truth? "O foolish Galatians, who has poisoned your minds?" "The poison of asps is under their lips." And so, the natural man can spread nothing but that which he possesses, namely, poison. Oh, what a poisonous religion was the religion of the Pharisees of old, and how many thousands are there now that carry with them a poisonous religion! They think it to be a healing religion; but every man that knows his own grief and his own sore, knows that these false gospels are poisonous religions, poisonous gospels. Again, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." This means the bitter enmity of the carnal mind against God. I feel a great desire, if it be the Lord's will, that every one of you as I go along this morning, it makes me speak gently and carefully, may be enabled to apply what I say, and to see whether you can truly say that you see yourself in this light, and whether you are the subject in your nature of these offences. If so, I am sure you will be glad of what I have to say in the next part. Now, then, the mouth being full of cursing and bitterness, denotes the bitter enmity of the carnal mind against God's truth. Some of us can recollect this. When the truth began to appear, when perhaps we first heard the sound, the command, "Go, work in my vineyard;" What! that free grace vineyard? That I will never go into though through grace we afterwards repented and went. Then, again, "their feet are swift to shed blood;" that is, swift to take away life. Let us put it in that form. Oh! how swift they were to take

away the Savior's life! how swift their feet were to take away the lives of his followers! what thousands of lives did they destroy! and how swift their feet are now to take away the reputation of the people of God, and especially of the ministers of God; how swift their feet are thus to shed blood I, if not actually shedding blood, seeing we live in propitious times comparatively, and have a providential protection for which we have to bless the Lord, yet that does not alter the fact that there are the elements in human nature. "Destruction and misery are in their ways." Is not this also a truth? Everyman while in a state of nature is in the way of destruction, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and misery is in his way; he has not yet come to the misery, for he has not yet lifted up his eyes in hell. "And the way of peace have they not known;" that way of reconciliation to God we presently have to notice they have not known. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Mark the language. They fear as to their health, they fear as to their circumstances, they fear as to their earthly enemies, and they fear in relation to their friends. We have all of us while in a state of nature ten thousand sorts of fears, every sort of fear except the fear of God. And the Savior would give us to understand that this godly fear will conquer all other fears; "Fear not them which after they have killed the body there is no more that they can do; I say unto you, Fear God; for it shall be well with them that fear God," implying that it shall not be well with them that do not fear God. Thus, then, if you would follow the apostle here, and sum up your character before God, you may kneel down before the Lord in private, and say, Lord, here I am, unrighteous as a sinner considered, apart from your grace and from your teaching, unrighteous, without understanding; I have never sought you; I have gone out of the way; I am unprofitable; I have done no good; my throat is an open sepulcher; with my tongue I have used deceit; the poison of asps has been under my lips; cursing and bitterness, or bitter enmity against you, was what I had in my mouth; and my feet were swift against you, but not for you, and destruction and misery were in my way, and I knew it not; the way of divine peace I knew not, and I feared you not. This is all you have to say; not a single good to plead. Oh! happy, thrice happy the man that sees himself in this light. This, then, is the offensive state we are in by nature; all these things make us infinitely and eternally offensive to God. Every one of these offences is in deadly antagonism to the nature and perfections of God, and to the welfare of the soul.

Now let us run through these with the Lord Jesus Christ, and see how beautifully he is the remedy for all our woe. First, "there is none righteous." But Jesus Christ was righteous; he was perfectly righteous; everything he thought, and said, and did, was right, and he is the end of the law of righteousness. Believe you this? If so, if you believe it with that faith that unites your sympathies to Christ, and makes you love him, then you are reckoned righteous, your unrighteousness, so offensive to God, is by him taken away, and his righteousness, so pleasing to God, imputed to you. Thus, instead of your standing before the judge of all so offensively, you stand before him approved, accepted in Christ Jesus the Lord. Second, "there is none that understands." But now you are brought to see that Jesus Christ as your representative understood everything. Even his adversaries when he was a youth were astonished at his understanding and answers. You will say to yourself, What a mercy that my Jesus Christ understood everything! He so perfectly understood the will of God that he committed no error. Noah, Moses, Solomon, and Zerubbabel, all these erected buildings according to the plan given to them by God, committed no error, and in each case the Lord stepped in and approved what they had done, because they had done it in entire accordance with that revelation, he had made to them. So, Jesus Christ has wrought out the will of God with perfect accuracy; he understood everything. And it is for you to understand that, that he understood everything. You understand only some things, but he understood everything, you

believe that; and you believe he understands everything now, and it is essential to you he should. If you believe he understands everything, if you look at the loaves and the fishes, and know not what to do, you believe he understands what to do; and if you look at any other crooks or deficiencies in circumstance, you say, I do not understand this, but Jesus Christ does; I do not understand that, but the Lord does; I cannot make that out, but the Lord can. So, then, lean not to your own understanding, but lean-to Christ's; and let this be your comfort, that whatever may be your ignorance, the Savior was and is of perfect understanding. "There is none that seeks after God." There never was and never will be a man that sought-after God as Jesus Christ did. Oh, with what ardor he sought after him all day; with what solemn earnestness he sought after him all night; yes, he continued all night in prayer to God. He sought God in all he said, in all he did in life, in death, in his rising triumphant from the grave, and on the throne of his glory; there he still seeks God. Now, then, if you are brought to receive him as having sought God in perfection, you will seek God in your humble measure; but your resting will be in this; the adversary will say, You do not seek very earnestly. But my Jesus Christ did. You do not seek very constantly. But my Jesus Christ did. So, you must plead him. Then, again, "they are all gone out of the way." But did Jesus Christ go out of the way? Had God the Father ever to appear to the Savior and say, "Where are you, my Son? This is your path, but you are out there. This is your path, but you are there"? No, no. Whenever the Lord appeared upon this matter, he always appeared in approbation. Did he appear where some of you do not seem disposed to appear, namely, in the divinely appointed ordinance of baptism? Was he right? There the Lord appeared: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And did he ascend the mount to have a little secret communion with God? Was he right? There the Lord appeared on mount Tabor at his transfiguration. Did the Savior a few days before he had to suffer appear at Jerusalem? Was he right? Yes, he was right; for there, only three days before his death, the Father again appeared: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Ah, then, Christian, remember Jesus Christ was never out of the way. Let him be your confidence; let him be your way. The law of God was his way; but the gospel of God must be your way, and so you will be reckoned as in the way, and not out of the way; you will be reckoned as in that way of holiness in which the ransomed snail walk, and shall come to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy shall be unto them. "They are together become unprofitable." Was Jesus Christ unprofitable? You will at once see this one clause would be enough to occupy hours to dwell upon, unprofitable, in contrast to the Savior, profitable. What profit is there in his righteousness, a number that no man can number to all eternity arrayed in it? What profit is there in his precious blood, the blood of the everlasting covenant, by which myriads and myriads of believers shall arrive triumphantly in the realms of bliss? Ah, how did he magnify the law, glorify all the perfections of God? And therefore, let the Christian say before the Lord, Lord, I am an unprofitable servant; but your dear Son was not unprofitable; he was every way advantageous, without a single drawback or defect. "There is none that does good, no, not one." Jesus Christ never did anything else but good, infinite good; he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. So then:

"The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before your throne;"

but Jesus Christ, the good that he has done, that we will plead, Therefore if you receive him as being the end of evil, you will be dealt with as having done the good that he has done, because the good that he has done is imputed to you. "Their throat is an open sepulcher." But Jesus Christ never received an error, a sin, or a deadly thing into his mind. Forty-fifth Psalm: "You are fairer

than the children of men;" because he was holy; "grace," and nothing but grace, purity, "is poured into your lips." "He grew in grace and in wisdom" not folly, wisdom, "and in favor with God and man." And if you are brought savingly to know him, then no longer will you receive the poisonous, deadly falsehoods of Satan, but you will receive the truth as it is in Jesus, and you will drink into his Spirit, and bless his holy name that ever he brought your soul to drink of that river which is indeed a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb. "With their tongues they have used deceit." But did Jesus Christ ever deceive himself or anyone else? He knew before he arrived at Jerusalem what should befall him. The apostle Paul did not. "I know not what shall befall me;" but Jesus Christ did. Peter said, "These things shall not come unto you." Ah, Peter, you have a deceitful tongue (for even the Christian does sometimes exercise a little of this, through the infirmity of his fallen nature). "Get you behind me, Satan; you savor not of the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." So, then, Jesus used no deceit; deceit was not found in his mouth. Our spiritual Aaron can indeed speak well. Do not let us boast of our freedom in ourselves from deceit, but let our plea be that Jesus delivers us from all our deceit. "The poison of asps is under their lips." But milk and honey were under his lips. Ah, with what nutritious words did he nourish up poor sinners, and with what sweetness did he speak to them. "Son, your sins are forgiven you." "Daughter, go in peace; your faith has made you whole." As I said on Friday night, the woman in Simon's house felt that she loved the Savior, and hardly knew that that love meant that her sins were forgiven; therefore, he explained the secret of that love that she had to him, and said, "Your sins are forgiven you." So, then, there was no poison of asps under his lips, but milk and honey. And so, of the church it is said the same: so, with the Christian, you will cease from those poisonous doctrines, and there will be milk and honey, as it were, under your lips; that is, there will be the receiving of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Did Jesus Christ, like Job, ever curse the day of his birth? or did he, like the rest of us, curse God? for all of us have by nature. No. He had no bitterness against the saints of God, nor against the God of the saints, but just the reverse. See the beatitudes in the 5th of Matthew. And so, we rejoice in the delightful truth that he, as our representative, brings us out of bitterness into reconciliation. "Their feet are swift to take away life." But his feet were swift to save life; he rejoiced to save life, as a strong man to run a race. His feet were swift to save life; his feet were as the hind upon the mountains. "Behold, my beloved comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills running to the rescue of his people, running for their salvation. He ran the mighty race; his feet were swift to save life. This shall be my plea; in receiving him as having done this, I cease to be offensive to God. "Destruction and misery are in their ways;" salvation and mercy in his way. He walked in the way that brought salvation; he rolled in a never-ceasing tide of eternal mercy. "And the way of peace have they not known;" but he made peace with God, and he is our peace. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." But "he shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."

Thus, then, look at these offences, and reckon yourself, each of you, to be the subject of every one. It will do you better than reading a doctor's book, wherein diseases are exaggerated, and the poor nervous thing says, "Well, I am touched with this, and that;" and fancy you have got all the diseases that are there specified. That does you no good. But this is beyond fancy. You may read all these, and rest assured that you are, in the fullest sense of the word, the subject of every one. And not one of these evils that I have named, these offences, can be got rid of but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was thus delivered for our offences. See the wisdom of God in contriving this plan; see the love of God in sending such a Savior; see the mercy of God to us personally in bringing us to

know our need of this salvation, and bringing us to receive the same. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Now I am aware I have said nothing this morning instructive to most of you; but I will tell you this, that when you come to die it will be just these things that you will look at. You will say, I am all that; is Jesus Christ my Savior? Is he my Surety? Have I received him? If so, I am righteous as he is righteous, and all these offences are blotted out and gone forever, and into the place thereof are put the infinite and eternal excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me, before I go to the next part, say to you emphatically, that religion is a spiritual thing. A man may be as moral as an angel, and yet be utterly destitute of vital religion. Where religion is, morality will follow; but the morality is not the religion, but only the shadow or outward expression of it, and hardly that. Religion is a vital, spiritual element in the soul, discovering to us these our offences, and revealing to us the Lord Jesus Christ, and receiving Jesus Christ in all the remedial relations which he bears; and both these are a secret, for the heart thus taught knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not intermeddle with its joy. This is that path that the vulture's eye has not seen. And as the Lord lives, when you come to die, if you have nothing but your external doings to lean upon, to help you will go; for there is no refuge, no place of security anywhere but dying in the Lord, dying in faith. The Lord preserve us, then, from a mere superficial, a mere put on, a mere fleshly, a mere bodily, a mere ceremonial religion, and discover to us our real condition, that we may receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and be made to rejoice that he was delivered for our offences, and that he bare those offences in his own body on the tree, and the pains of death were loosed; for it was not possible he should be held by them.

We now step into the next department, *the justification*; "And he was raised again for our justification." I feel tempted, but I must not stop to enlarge upon the wonders of the resurrection of Christ. He rose for our justification. I think there are two things meant here. First, rising for our justification, inasmuch as by his resurrection he brought in the righteousness which by his life he had wrought out. You can distinguish between this, can you not? He worked out by his life our justification. Hence it is said we are justified by his righteousness, and justified by his blood. In the 5th chapter we read that "God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Let us, therefore, take the justification here to mean the whole of his mediatorial work, constituting the people eternally complete before God. Now, then, if he had not risen from the dead, he could not have brought this righteousness in. He wrought it out, but then he rose from the dead in order to bring it in. Let us take Daniel's view of this, which is beautiful to the last degree. In his 9th chapter, Daniel, after setting before us the atoning death of Christ as having made reconciliation, then says, "and to bring in everlasting righteousness;" that is, he made matters everlastingly right. When God created man, he made things conditionally right; and he placed the Israelites under an old covenant, he placed them conditionally, he made things conditionally right. But here Jesus Christ has brought in everlasting righteousness, made things eternally right, that things can never get wrong again. It is eternal life. There is no disturbing of this state of things. "Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven." "And to seal up the vision and prophecy." The word "seal" there means nothing else but to confirm. The Old Testament saints had certain visions concerning things to come; Christ confirmed those visions. The Old Testament prophets were favored with divine revelations, and Christ confirmed those revelations. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" So that he went according as it was written of him, and thus he sealed vision and prophecy, that is, confirmed them. It was done, completed,

never can be disturbed. "And to anoint the most Holy;" that is, Christ is the King; he is anointed above his fellows, that is, above his fellow kings, so I take it. The kings of Judah were anointed with the oil of joy, David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, and Josiah, and some other kings of Judah, afforded great joy to the people. But Christ, in his exaltation, affords a joy to the people infinitely surpassing the joy of the typical people, or of the typical kings; he has done a work no other king could do, and is therefore anointed with the oil of joy above his fellows. So then rising for our justification is to bring in this everlasting righteousness. I must quote upon this part that scripture in the 3rd of Malachi. What was the bringing in by Christ's resurrection of his work but the bringing of tithes into the storehouse? "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house;" and if Christ did not bring in his work, the gospel would not be meat to you; "and prove me now herewith, said the Lord of hosts," in Christ Jesus, "if I will not open you the windows of heaven" that is, the promises of the Old Testament; they are the windows of heaven; on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost did open them, and they have been open ever since, "and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it;" nor was there, nor is there now.

"We are all little children, and we cannot endure very much. Bless the Lord, then, there is always an infinity of blessedness to look forward to. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." But again, his rising for our justification means not only the bringing in of his mediatorial work and all the promises thereby, but, secondly, to justify us in our profession. You would not be justified in looking for eternal life by Jesus Christ, you would not be justified in looking to the promises being fulfilled, you would not be justified in looking to God to show you mercy, if Christ had not risen from the dead. So, "if Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain." Jesus Christ did rise, and that justifies our preaching. "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain;" but he has risen, and that justifies our confidence in him. "If Christ be not risen, you are yet in your sins but Christ is risen, and therefore justifies us in believing we are not in our sins, but in him. "If Christ be not risen, then they that have fallen asleep in Jesus have perished;" but Christ is risen, and those that have fallen asleep in Jesus are in heaven. John saw a great multitude there; Lazarus is there. If Christ be not risen, "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," to have all these afflictions and sufferings, and bear all this reproach, and be so frightfully disappointed at the last. We might as well say then, "Let us eat and drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die;" we are but beasts, and let us live like beasts. But then evil communications, the apostle knew, would corrupt good manners, and, therefore, he says, " But now is Christ risen from the dead."