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**A S E R M O N**

ON

**THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.**

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BY THOMAS WILLIAMS.

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PROVIDENCE:  
HALL & PEIRCE, PRINTERS,  
32 Westminster Street.  
1858.

SERMONS

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## SALVATION.

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“This is an hard saying; who can hear it!”—JOHN, vi. : 60

IN the context is an account of a doctrine, which was preached by the Lord Jesus Christ: and which greatly offended a large number of his professed disciples. By this doctrine they were so offended, that they said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” Well may it be asked, What was the doctrine, which Christ taught? and which was so offensive to his hearers? An answer to these questions may be obtained from the context. Jesus had said to his hearers, “Labor not for the meat, which perisheth; but for that meat, which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for him hath God, the Father, sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” In these words the Saviour taught the doctrine, which offended so many of his professed disciples. He taught the great doctrine of salvation, through faith in his name. The truth on this subject he repeated and enforced, in our context. He said, “This is the will of him, that sent me: that every one, who seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.” Again he said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he, that believeth on me, hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life.” He also said, “This is the bread, that cometh down from heaven; that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread, that I shall give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Again the Saviour said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” In this last sentence the Saviour has reference to the sacrifice of himself, in which his body was broken and his blood was shed on the cross for the salvation of sinners.

The instructions which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to his hearers in the preceding quotations, teach us, that sinners must rely on his atoning sacrifice for the life of their souls, as really as men rely on their food for the life of their bodies. It is certain and evident, that in the Saviour's discourse, which was so offensive to his hearers, he explained

and enforced this important doctrine;—That sinners can not be saved, without entire reliance on him for salvation. It was this doctrine, which was so offensive to his hearers, that many of his disciples said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?”—The doctrine, which was so offensive, when it was taught by the Saviour, is equally offensive to sinners in every age of the world.

The words of our text, in their proper connection, place before us the following sentiment,—The divine requirement of entire reliance, on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, is very offensive to sinners.

To illustrate this sentiment, it is proposed,

I. To show what this divine requirement implies.

Reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ is the condition, on which salvation is offered to sinners in the gospel. He said to his disciples, “Go ye into all the world; and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall be damned.” The doctrine of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, has been frequently misunderstood and perverted to evil purposes. It is important and necessary to perceive and know what is implied, in entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation. On this subject, it may,

1. Be observed, it does not imply, that they, who rely on him for salvation, have no other duties to perform. Many have imagined, if they once believe on Christ, they shall be entitled to salvation: and be bound to perform no other duty. They have supposed, that in such freedom consists the liberty, which the gospel affords to believers. It has been the chief object of such persons to maintain the notion, that they were believers, while they have allowed themselves to live in neglect of the most important duties: and in the indulgence of very sinful practices. The epistles of the apostles afford reason to conclude, that many, in their days, imagined, because faith is the condition of salvation, they were bound to perform no other duties. Paul and James oppose the false notions and evil practices of such erroneous and ungodly professors of the gospel. While Paul says, “Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;” he also says, “Do we, then, make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” By James it is written, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Wilt thou know, O vain man! that faith without works is dead?” Though they, who believe the gospel, are saved by faith, they are not, on this account, released from any obligation to perform every duty, which they owe, by the perfect law of God, to their Creator, their fellow-citizens and themselves. It is impossible, for any rational being, ever to be released from an obligation to be constantly and perfectly holy. Though sinners be required to do nothing, but believe in Christ, that they may be saved; yet they are bound to repent of their sins and to walk in obedience to every divine command.

2. The requirement of entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation does not imply, that they, who obey the gospel, will not be approved and rewarded for their holy and virtuous conduct. It is sometimes supposed, that entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation, by faith alone, is inconsistent with good works. It is pretended, that this sen-

timent has a dangerous influence, as it will embolden persons to do evil, since they can be saved by faith only. It is also pretended, that this sentiment destroys every foundation and encouragement for virtuous conduct. But they, who disbelieve and reject the instructions of divine truth and the salvation, which is offered in the gospel through faith in Jesus Christ, never perform any duty; nor do they ever have one holy affection. Their hearts are full of evil; and they choose darkness rather than light. True faith always works by love and produces good works. Though faith in Christ is the only condition of salvation, every person will receive a reward according to his conduct in this state of trial. The Saviour says, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." It is written, "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond, or free." The Holy Spirit says by the apostle, "He, that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly. But he, that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." They, who believe on the Saviour, will not be saved by their works, but their future reward in heaven will be in exact proportion to their holy services.

3. The entire reliance of sinners on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation implies, that he is the only foundation of their deliverance from endless punishment. The good deeds of those persons, who repent and believe the gospel, though they have affections which are perfectly holy and perform holy duties, form no part of the foundation, on which salvation is offered to sinners. This salvation consists in deliverance from endless punishment. They, who are saved from this punishment, are saved wholly on Christ's account. His atoning sacrifice is the only foundation of their salvation. It is written, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved." Again: "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On this foundation God declares and manifests his righteousness, "That he might be just and the justifier of him, who believeth in Jesus." To the saints at Corinth the apostle writes, "Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel, which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and in which ye stand: by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I declared unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." By Peter it is written, "Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." When sinners are required to rely on Jesus Christ, that they may be saved, the very requirement implies, that they, who truly rely on him for salvation, are saved wholly for his sake. Nothing, but the blood of Christ, avails any thing, in the foundation for the salvation of sinners, from the wrath of God, the curse of the law and the pains of endless death. Their good works avail towards their reward and their eternal blessedness and glory in heaven; but

they, do not remove nor lessen their desert of endless punishment ; nor form the least reason for their deliverance from the punishment, which they will deserve to suffer for ever and ever.

4. Entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation implies, that faith in him is the only condition of salvation. Though other duties be required of sinners and of saints for other purposes, yet nothing, but faith, is required of any human being, in order to his forgiveness and salvation from punishment. The Saviour says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." It is written, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that though this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins : and by him, all, that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." To the question, "What must I do to be saved?" the apostles answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." It is written, "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Again—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And again, "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision : but faith, that worketh by love." We are taught throughout the Scriptures, that they, who believe in Jesus Christ, shall be saved ; and that they who do not believe in him, shall perish."

Reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, by true faith in his name, is the condition and the only condition, that is required of sinners, that they may be saved from the condemning sentence of the law and from endless punishment. It is true, that sinners are required to repent. They might have been required : and would have been bound to repent, if there were no Saviour and no foundation for forgiveness. Without repentance toward God, no person will ever have true faith toward Jesus Christ. Sinners are required to be perfectly holy ; and they would be bound to be so, if there were no foundation for their salvation from endless punishment. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was offered on the cross, that God might maintain and manifest his holiness, justice, goodness and truth and establish a foundation for the salvation of sinners, is the only possible foundation on which he can pardon and save any human being. It is written, "For it is the blood, that maketh an atonement for the soul." And again—"Without shedding of blood is no remission." Whatever sinners may be required and be obliged to do, for other reasons, they can not be, properly and strictly, required to do any thing, but to believe on Christ for salvation. This duty they are required to do, that they may be saved. This divine requirement implies, that the atonement, which has been made by the blood of Jesus Christ, is the only foundation ; and that faith in his name is the only condition, on which sinners can be forgiven and saved from eternal punishment.

II. It is now proposed to show, why sinners are offended, by the requirement to rely wholly on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

When he was on earth, many, who had seen his miracles, who had admired his instructions and had professed to be his disciples, were



greatly offended by this divine requirement. When he dwelt plainly and fully on this doctrine, that none can be saved, without entire reliance on him for salvation, many of his disciples said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" In the context we are informed, "from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." The doctrine, that they must rely wholly on him for salvation, or perish, was wounding and painful to their hearts. They chose to renounce every prospect and hope of salvation, rather than to be saved on such an humbling condition. Wherever the gospel has been preached, sinners have been offended by the condition of salvation, that is required in the scriptures. The Lord Jesus Christ has taught and preached; and he requires his ministers to teach and preach in his name, that he, who believeth, shall be saved; and that he, who believeth not, shall be damned. This doctrine is commonly accounted by sinners a hard saying. And they are offended, when they are truly taught to rely wholly on Jesus Christ for salvation. But why are they offended by this divine and gracious requirement? To this question it may be answered,

1. They can not be offended, because they are unable to understand what is meant by this requirement. They sometimes complain of the doctrines and duties of the gospel, because they are so obscure, *as they pretend*, that they cannot be understood. It is possible, that they may imagine and pretend, that they are unable to understand what is meant by entire reliance on Christ for salvation. If they are unable to understand this divine requirement and should be punished for disobedience to what they could not understand, they would have reason to complain, not of an hard saying only, but of hard treatment. Sinners are able to understand the condition, on which they are offered the salvation of the gospel. For many sinners of inferior capacity and information do understand and obey this requirement. No sinner would ever disapprove, if he did not understand what the gospel requires of sinners, that they may be saved.

2. Sinners are not offended by the duty of entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation, because they are unable to comply with this divine requirement. It would be inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God to require of sinners what they are unable, by incapacity, to perform. It can not be conceived, that any condition of salvation could be easier than reliance on Jesus Christ. A compliance with this condition is represented, in the scriptures, by an allusion to such actions, as are most commonly and easily performed by mankind. It is sometimes called looking to Christ. Sometimes it is called turning to him. And it is called coming to him. A simple reliance on Christ for salvation is no more difficult than the common actions of life. Whenever sinners are truly disposed to come to Christ, they always find themselves able to do it. By their own experience they know and declare, that no easier condition of salvation is possible, or desirable. Nothing can hinder any sinner's reliance on Christ for salvation, but his obstinate unwillingness to comply with the gospel of divine truth and grace. It is not because sinners are unable to obey the gospel, that they do not rely on Christ for salvation; but are offended by this plain and easy condition of deliverance from endless punishment. It

requires as much power and as great an effort to reject the salvation, which is offered in the gospel, as it requires to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Why, then, are sinners offended by the divine requirement of reliance on Christ Jesus for salvation? To this question,

3. It may be answered, this requirement wholly rejects their own righteousness from the foundation of their forgiveness and justification. If sinners can not be saved, without reliance on Christ for salvation, their own works avail nothing towards their deliverance from punishment. We are taught, by the whole system of divine truth in the gospel, that no human being can be saved from endless misery, on account of his own righteousness. "It is written, There is none righteous; no, not one.—Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Sinners are offended by such a method of salvation, as wholly excludes and rejects what they account their good deeds. They commonly think very highly of the goodness of their hearts and the usefulness of their services. Sometimes they are very constant and abundant in their religious performances, that they may, by their own worthiness, obtain the favor of God. Their fancied goodness and self-righteous performances are the only foundation, on which they rely for the present favor of God and for future happiness, so long as they refuse to repent and believe the gospel. This worthless and delusive foundation is very pleasing to their proud and selfish hearts. According to the gospel sinners are wholly destitute of goodness and entirely sinful, until they repent. Nor can this repentance, nor can any services, which they may perform, after they become pardoned believers, either on earth, or in heaven, remove their guiltiness and desert of punishment. They, who have once sinned, can never have any goodness and worthiness, in which they can trust for salvation from the righteous penalty of the law. The vicarious sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only foundation of salvation, from eternal punishment, for any human being. But as this foundation, which is established by the wisdom and justice, the truth and grace of God, makes no account of what sinners falsely call their good works, in which they wholly trust for the divine favor, they are highly offended by the requirement to rely entirely on Jesus Christ, by faith, for salvation from punishment.

4. This requirement is very offensive to sinners, because it implies, that they deserve to be punished for ever. If they do not so deserve to be punished, why should they be required to believe in Christ for salvation from the curse of the law? It is easy to see, that it would be improper and absurd to make entire reliance on Christ the condition of salvation from eternal punishment, unless every sinner deserves to be punished for ever. Yet nothing is more offensive and painful to sinners than a knowledge and conviction of their ill desert. Whatever awakens their consciences, to a conviction of their desert of punishment, wounds and pains their proud and guilty spirits. For this reason they are greatly offended by the requirement to rely wholly on Christ for salvation. For this requirement is founded on their desert of endless perdition. But sinners are very unwilling to see, to feel and confess, that they are so guilty and hateful in the sight of God, as

to deserve his everlasting displeasure. If they are saved, wholly through Christ alone, they must for ever feel and confess, that they deserve to perish. The condition, on which God offers salvation to sinners, strikes a fatal blow to the deceitful and pleasant conceit of their own worthiness of any favor from him. They can not bear, with their proud and selfish hearts, such a condition of salvation, as is founded on their desert of endless punishment.

5. The requirement of reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation is very offensive to sinners, because it implies a cordial reconciliation to divine justice in their condemnation. The whole gospel is founded on the holiness, justice and goodness of God in the foundation, requirements, prohibitions, penalties and sanction of the divine law. The Saviour says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." When the Levites proclaimed the curse of the law, against every sinner, with a loud voice, *All the people were required to say, Amen.* They, who oppose the law and justice of God in the condemnation and punishment of sinners, do as strongly oppose his gospel and grace in their forgiveness and salvation. No one, who refuses to accept the punishment of his iniquity, which divine justice inflicts, will ever accept the forgiveness of his offences, which divine mercy offers. Jesus Christ says of sinners, "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Every sinner hates both Jesus Christ and the gospel, as well as God and the law. Sinners will reject the salvation of the gospel, so long as they refuse to submit to the righteousness of God in their condemnation and punishment. They, who truly believe and receive the gospel of divine grace, approve and love the law of divine justice. The apostle says, "The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy and just and good." Again he says, "I, through the law, am dead to the law; that I might live unto God." When sinners are faithfully and wisely taught the truth, as it is in Jesus, they see and know, that true faith in Jesus Christ for salvation implies real repentance towards God and a cordial submission to his justice in their punishment. They are conscious to themselves, that they hate the law and justice of God in their condemnation. Nor are they less conscious, when they are rightly taught the truth respecting themselves, that they hate the gospel and the mercy of God in the salvation of sinners. Their hearts rise, in total and malignant enmity, against the divine requirement of entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation from the wrath of God, the curse of the law and eternal punishment. When they were taught the truth on this subject by the Lord Jesus Christ, they said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" When he told his hearers, why they were offended by his instructions respecting their duty, "From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him."

6th. Sinners are offended by the requirement of entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation, because it implies, that they have no security against eternal punishment, until they do believe on his name. If faith in Christ be the only condition of salvation, they, who do not believe in him, will be condemned and punished for ever. They are constantly lia-

ble to eternal punishment, while they persist in their unbelief and rejection of the gospel. So long as they do not wholly renounce what they falsely account their own goodness, nor confess their ill desert and cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, they are under a sentence of condemnation; and they may justly, at any moment, be consigned to endless woe and despair. But sinners are very unwilling to be reminded and convicted of their guilty and dangerous condition. And they are offended by that divine and gracious requirement, which shows, that they are "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity;" and can never be secure against eternal destruction, until they repent and believe the gospel. A true knowledge and thorough conviction of their guilt and danger always destroys the comfort and the hope of sinners. They are very unwilling to awake from their stupidity; and to see themselves to be constantly exposed to the endless torments of hell. If they must rely on Jesus Christ, or perish, until they do rely on him to be saved, they have no security against the immediate infliction of endless punishment. But they are offended by the requirement of entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation. For so long as this requirement is placed before their minds and applied to their consciences, they must perceive, that they are in constant danger of endless misery and despair.

7. The requirement to rely on Jesus Christ by faith for salvation is offensive to sinners, because they are wholly unwilling to obey this divine and gracious requirement. The Gospel, in its object, origin, foundation, connections and consequences, is a system of pure, perfect, eternal and infinite benevolence. It unites and manifests every mental and moral perfection of the almighty, ever blessed and ever gracious God, for the accomplishment of the greatest, wisest and best purposes, by the redemption of sinners through Jesus Christ. They, who are truly willing to be saved by faith in his name, will not only obtain present forgiveness and salvation with eternal blessedness and glory; but they will obtain all the holiness and happiness of God, with all the interests, enjoyments and honors of his eternal kingdom. Sinners lose nothing and gain all things, by reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation. Yet they are offended by the only possible and most easy condition of salvation, as it is offered in the gospel. And they are so offended, because they are unwilling to be saved from endless punishment, through faith in the name and blood of Jesus Christ. When he was on earth, he said to sinners, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." They may know, from their own affections and actions, that they are unwilling to deny themselves and to receive the salvation of the gospel, for the sake of Jesus Christ and not for the sake of their own safety and happiness. They know, if they had been willing to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, they would long before this time, have received the gospel; and been in a safe and happy condition. Though they have constantly had the offer of salvation and been urged, by the strongest motives, to accept it, yet they have been unwilling to be saved. They have hated the author and the object, the foundation and condition of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. When they are taught the truth and their duty, on this subject, they are sensible, that with such hearts, as they are conscious they have in themselves, they never shall believe on Christ and receive and enjoy eternal salvation.—Sinners, in their hearts, are opposed to the foundation and the condition of the salvation, which is offered in the gospel. They are offended, when

they are required to believe and do, in order to be saved, what they hate and oppose with all their hearts. They can not bear to be required to perform, as the only condition of salvation, a duty, which they are conscious they are unwilling to do. When they are taught, that they must believe on Jesus Christ, or perish for ever, they are ready to say from their hearts, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. As reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation, we may see why the Saviour is so constantly set before us in the scriptures. After the fall the first promise of the Saviour was made, in what God said to the serpent respecting the seed of the woman; "It shall bruise thy head." The early sacrifices were typical of the Saviour. The Saviour was repeatedly promised to Abraham. He was foretold by Jacob. The Jewish institutions had constant reference to the Redeemer. His character and kingdom are described in the psalms and by the prophets. When Christ was on earth, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself." And he said, "all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning me." When the Saviour was manifest in the flesh, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Christ declared himself to be "the light of the world;" and "the way, the truth and the life." After his ascension, the apostles, in their instructions, always had the Saviour before their eyes and in their hearts. In their epistles to the churches, they keep Christ and his cross always in sight. He is constantly and fully set before us, because no human being can be saved from endless punishment, without entire reliance on him for salvation. If there were any other name under heaven given among men, by which we could be saved, his name might be forgotten and despised. His name is the only hope of sinners. And without faith in his name, none can be saved. "Christ is all and in all" in the salvation of sinners. On this account he is always placed before us in the scriptures.

2. Since sinners are required to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from endless punishment, we may see what he has done, that they may be saved. He has given himself to die, on the cross, to make an atonement for the sins of men. His atonement lays a foundation for God, consistently with his truth and justice, to forgive and save every sinner, who repents and believes in his name. Such an atonement was necessary, since every sinner is justly condemned to endless punishment. Such an atonement Christ has made by his death, if sinners can be saved by him and for his sake. Jesus Christ did not come into the world, merely as a prophet to give instruction: Nor merely to set an example of virtue and holiness. Nor has he died, merely as a martyr to the truth. Nor has he died to make amends to sinners, for what they have lost by Adam. Nor has he given to every sinner's heart a certain spark of true light, or real goodness. Nor has he released any sinner from an obligation to obey the law, as a rule of duty. Nor has he delivered any sinner, while impenitent, from a sentence of condemnation to endless misery. Nor has he secured the repentance and salvation of all mankind. But he has, by his death on the cross, made such an atonement, that God can be just and yet pardon and save sinners, who repent and believe in him, from the punishment, which they deserve to suffer for ever. A true and full ac-

count of what has been done, for the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, is given by the apostle to the saints at Rome. He says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption, that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that are past, through the forbearance of God;—to declare at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him, that believeth in Jesus." The great and special work of the Saviour's office on earth was to establish a foundation, by his own death, for the redemption of sinners through faith in his blood. It is written, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

3. By the doctrine of the present discourse, we see why God condemns every system of religion, which does not make entire reliance on Jesus Christ the only condition of salvation. Every other system, that flatters sinners with a hope and prospect of salvation, is false and fatal. And God condemns every such system of religion. He condemns the idolatry of heathen nations. He condemns the false notions of the Jews. He condemns the corruptions and perversions of the gospel, that were introduced by false teachers in the days of the apostles. By the Holy Spirit the apostle says to the churches of Galatia, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that, which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." There is no occasion, nor reason for any darkness, or doubt respecting the gospel, which was taught and preached by the apostles and received and professed by the first christian churches. They taught and preached, they received and professed the one true gospel of salvation, through the death of Jesus Christ and by faith in his name. Nor can there ever be any other foundation, or condition, on which any human being can be saved. Though there have been in all ages, many professors and teachers of religion, who have denied the true doctrine of salvation by Christ; yet, in the scriptures and by the whole system of divine truth and grace, God wholly condemns their sentiments. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ is ever the only foundation; and true faith in his name the only condition of salvation. Whatever religious sentiment, or practice, or system, or person, varies from this method of salvation God will always condemn and reject.

4. Since the requirements of the gospel are offensive to sinners, the religious sentiments, with which they are pleased, do not agree with the gospel. The sentiments, which Jesus Christ preached, when he was on earth, were displeasing to sinners. Nor were they less displeased by the sentiments, which were taught and preached by the apostles.—Nor are any sinners, at this day, pleased with the instructions and requirements of the gospel. But on religious subjects many sentiments, which are pleasing to the hearts of sinners, are preached and professed, at this day, by multitudes, who are very confident in their religious opinions and affections. Sinners are pleased, when they are taught, that they are not, by nature, totally depraved and sinful. They are pleased, when they are taught, that they have some goodness in their

hearts. They are pleased, when they are taught to cultivate the goodness in themselves, instead of a cordial submission to the law and justice of God and entire reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation. They are commonly pleased, when they are taught to believe such doctrines and perform such duties, as oppose and reject the very foundation and essence of the gospel. The true gospel is especially and obstinately opposed by self-righteous and self-deceived professors and teachers of religion. They are the persons, who are commonly the first and most subtle opposers of the pure and sound doctrines of divine grace. It is written, "Light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Some teachers attempt and profess to preach the doctrines of the Bible, in such a manner, as gives no offence to impenitent transgressors. Such persons have reason to fear, that they have the character of false teachers, to whom God says by the prophet, "With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." The apostle says, "Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The gospel of God never has been and never can be truly, fully and plainly preached to sinners, so as to give no offence to their proud and selfish hearts. The sentiments, which please the hearts of sinners, oppose the fundamental and essential doctrines and duties, which the Lord Jesus Christ taught and preached.

5. Since the requirement to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, is offensive to sinners, their depravity is very malignant. In the gospel God manifests himself, in his infinite greatness and goodness. He offers himself to sinners to be their God and Saviour, their friend and portion, with all the blessings and glories of his kingdom. He has established the most glorious and the only possible foundation for the salvation of sinners. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" With the most tender affection and kindness, the Saviour says, "Come unto me, all ye, that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy; and my burden is light." Yet he was obliged to say, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou, that killest the prophets and stonest them, who art sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and ye would not."—Why did sinners so treat the Saviour and reject the salvation of the gospel?—Why did they hate, oppose and persecute the apostles? Why do they treat the Bible and the offer of salvation, with negligence and contempt? Why do they account the doctrine of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, a hard saying? Why have we ever refused and delayed to come to Christ for salvation? How can we account for the conduct of mankind in all ages, in respect to the gospel of the grace of God? How can we account for our own conduct, respecting the salvation, which is offered to us in the gospel? If we know and believe the truth, shall we not answer, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Would sinners be

offended by what the gospel requires, that they may be saved, if their hearts were not full of evil? and if madness were not in their hearts? Sinners are not only totally depraved, but their depravity is as malignant as possible.

6. Since sinners are offended by what God requires in the gospel, that they may be saved, they never will accept salvation, if God does not change their hearts. They may imagine, that the difficulty respecting their salvation is not in themselves. They may imagine, that it is on account of their circumstances, that they do not embrace the gospel. They may suppose, that something is defective, or faulty, or obscure, or hard, in the gospel itself and the condition of salvation. But, if they were only willing to be saved, in the easiest and the best and the only way, they would accept salvation, as it is freely offered in the gospel. The difficulty respecting their salvation lies wholly in their hearts. It is through their unreasonable, voluntary and criminal selfishness, that they are offended by the kind and gracious offers of the gospel. It is in their hearts to destroy themselves, rather than accept salvation through Jesus Christ. Nor will any means or motives, however powerful, induce sinners to receive what they hate and oppose. Unless they be renewed in the temper of their minds and have a new heart and a right spirit, they will form themselves into vessels of wrath and fit themselves for destruction. The gospel can not be altered in the least respect. The condition of salvation and the duty of sinners can never be changed. They, who do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, can never be saved. Is there, then, no foundation to hope for the salvation of sinners?—God says to the Lord Jesus Christ, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” Again he says, “A new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stoney heart out of your flesh; and I will give you a heart of flesh.—And ye shall be my people; and I will be your God.” The almighty power and special grace of God can cause sinners to renounce their enmity against him, to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to accept salvation through faith in his name.

7. Since sinners may be saved from endless punishment, by confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, they, whose hearts are right, will greatly rejoice in the gospel. As soon as any person has a good and honest heart, he will receive and love the instructions of divine truth. Then he will perceive and know, that God, in the gospel, has the greatest and best objects, in respect to himself and all other beings and all events. They, who have a right spirit, will renounce their selfish affections, interests and enjoyments; and they will return to God with supreme love and delight; and they will approve of the divine law and justice in the condemnation and punishment of sinners. As soon as they have, in their hearts, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, they will have a new song in their mouth, even praise unto God. They then will praise him for his perfections and purposes, for his law and gospel; for his holiness, justice and goodness in the punishment of sinners; as well as for his grace, wisdom and sovereignty in the redemption of his people. They, who have a penitent and humble spirit, will not complain, that they can not understand the gospel; or that they can not perform the duty, which God requires, that they may be saved. They will not refuse to re-



nounce their self-righteous spirit and performances. They will feel and confess their desert of endless punishment. Nor will they desire to be secure against such punishment, only on the foundation and condition, on which God offers to forgive and save sinners. Nor will their hearts refuse, or delay to rely wholly on Jesus Christ for salvation.—They can say, as Paul says, “God forbid, that I should glory. save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” The object and method of salvation, through Jesus Christ, are infinitely glorious and joyful in the sentiments and affections of penitent and humble believers.

8. Since sinners are offended by the requirements of the gospel, they will be wholly blameable for their destruction. They would have been saved, if they would only have renounced their wickedness and turned to God by faith in Jesus Christ. But they rejected the counsel of God against themselves. For what object did they reject the counsel of infinite wisdom and goodness? For the vain, transient and deceitful objects of this present world. Why did they choose and pursue these objects? To gratify their proud and selfish spirit.—Now they must suffer the evil and bitter effects of their sinful conduct, in the endless darkness, despair and torments of hell. Whom can they blame for their destruction? Will they blame God?—He will say, “I have called and ye refused. Ye have set at naught all my counsel; and would none of my reproof.” Will they blame Jesus Christ? He will say, “Ye would not come to me, that ye might have life.” Can they truly say of the doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ, “It is an hard saying; who can hear it?” They were freely offered the blessings of the gospel; and they chose the hard way of transgressors rather than the ways of wisdom, which are pleasantness. They perish because they obstinately and perseveringly rejected the salvation of the gospel. “After their hardness and impenitent heart, they treasured unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish unto every soul of man, that doeth evil.” The whole guilt and blame of their destruction and misery must be upon themselves for ever. The hardness is not in the gospel of Jesus Christ; but is in their proud hearts and stubborn spirits.

9. Since God requires sinners to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be saved, believers must live by faith in him, if they will enjoy evidence of their future salvation. The apostle teaches the proper and practical influence of true faith in Jesus Christ, when he says, “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and he died for all, that they, who live, shall not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them and rose again.” He also says, “I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”—While christians renounce every degree of confidence in themselves and live by faith in Jesus Christ, they abide in him, as the branch abides in the vine; and they will bear much fruit and will have abundant evidence, that they are his friends. He says, “If any will come after me, let him deny

himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." If real christians begin to indulge a self-righteous spirit and refuse to deny themselves for Christ's sake, they will become ignorant and insensible of their unworthiness and ill-desert. They will leave their first love. They will err from the ways of God; and harden their hearts from his fear. They will then learn by their sorrowful experience, the truth of what God said to his ancient people; "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee; and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God; and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. For of old time have I broken thy yoke and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress."—Believers are under the most solemn and tender bonds to live a life of constant obedience and self-denial for Christ's sake. It is only by such a life, that they can receive the powerful and gracious influence of the Divine Spirit; and maintain the lively and vigorous exercise of holy affections. To christians the apostle says, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God,"—And Peter says, "Grow in grace and in the knowlege of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." If christians do not grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ by faith, they will decline in hope and joy.

It is only by humble, constant and faithful reliance on Christ alone, for salvation from present condemnation and eternal punishment, that christians can perform the duties and enjoy the blessings of the gospel. If they decline in their reliance on Jesus Christ for justification, they will equally decline from their reliance on the Holy Spirit for sanctification; and they will destroy, or lessen their evidence of future and eternal redemption.

10. They, who complain of the gospel and reject the offer of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, are called and bound to repent of their wickedness. The rejection of the salvation, which is offered in the gospel, is the greatest offence, which human beings can commit. The commission of this offence arises from enmity against God and his law. So long as any person refuses, or delays to believe on Christ for salvation, he places and keeps himself under the wrath of God, the curse of the law and the sentence of condemnation to eternal punishment. And he is constantly and rapidly fitting himself for that perdition, by which God will show his wrath and make his power known on the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Such is the sin and guilt and danger of every person, who does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Will any inquire, What, then, is my duty? God truly and kindly gives the answer—"Repent: so iniquity shall not be your ruin." You, who are not real christians, are brought to one single point, in respect to your duty and salvation. For he, who offers you salvation through his own blood on the cross, says to sinners, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." It is written, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." AMEN.

Providence, 9th April, 1852,



