

ENEMIES TURNED INTO FRIENDS

A SERMON

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“Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under you.” Psalm 45:5

THERE is constituted by the everlasting God an eternal oneness between Jesus Christ and the people whom God has been pleased in his great love and mercy to choose in Christ Jesus the Lord. And it was in these counsels that their sins, foreseen by the Lord, were imputed to Christ, he stood in that responsibility all the ages that rolled by before he came to pay the solemn and mighty debt which that responsibility involved. But in the fulness of time he did come, and he did make good that responsibility, he did bear those sins imputed to him in his own body on the tree; he did put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and he worked out for the people an entire conformity to himself. And here it is the Lord loves his people; here it is he sees them always the same; when they are in a state of nature, still the same in his counsel; after called by his grace, still the same when they are in bondage or in liberty, when they are cast down or raised up, when they are the subjects of faults or raised above those faults, through all the changes they go it makes no difference to the oneness that they have with Christ, but rather these circumstances are the means in the Lord’s hands of revealing to them more and more the necessity of this order of things. Now this is the scene which the Psalmist makes the theme of this beautiful Psalm; and this great subject of Christ and the church, called in this Psalm the king and the queen; “Upon your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir, She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework;” this is the chief theme of this Psalm, and this is what David calls a good matter; “My heart is inditing (i.e. composing) a good matter; there is nothing so good.

“One with Jesus:
By eternal union one.”

Our escape from every evil, our possession of every good, is founded in that blessed truth; so that he might well call this a good matter. “I speak of the things which I have made;” made out I suppose he means, “touching the king,” And so delighted was the Psalmist with this matter, that he says, “My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” There is nothing will set the soul, the heart, the affections, the tongue going in prayer and praise like a knowledge of what God is in Christ, like an acquaintance with that entire acceptance that we have in Christ, that approbation of the great

God which we have in his dear Son. But in order to come into this, there must be some heart work. All of us by nature are enemies, and far off by wicked works; the carnal mind is enmity against God. Our text therefore contains a description of the way in which the Savior acquires personal possession of his people, the way in which the king goes forth, conquering and to conquer: "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under you."

I of course shall treat these words this morning as descriptive of the conversion of a soul to God. I think this is the way in which we usually apply these words, and I will never deviate from the general acceptance of any part of the word of God by the people of God unless I am thoroughly convinced of there being a necessity for so doing. I will never try to be singular for the sake of being singular; I will never try to view any one scripture in a different light from that in which it has been viewed by good men and Christians in all countries without an absolute manifest necessity to do so. Whatever varieties there may be in the gifts of the Blessed Spirit, they are all essentially one, the grace is one; all are brought to know what they are as sinners, and all are brought to agree to the great principle, and to make that their standing place, that "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God." I notice then our text this morning under two main points; the first shall be *The Arrow of Conviction*, "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies;" and the second shall be *The Sure Effect thereof*, "whereby the people fall under you."

First: I notice then, first, *The ARROW of Conviction*. Now my hearer, this, as I will at once prove, is an essentially important matter. You read in the New Testament of the people who were effectually convinced of their state that they were pricked in their hearts. I will therefore this morning try to describe, or rather to point out what this is.

In the first place, this arrow of conviction, and there must be a conviction of our state as sinners; indeed, there must be what is fairly here indicated, "Your arrows are sharp in the *heart*." Now an arrow, to enter the heart of a man, and especially to enter in the way that is here evidently, intended, "sharp in the heart," and to remain rankling in the heart, it is as sure to kill the man as that the man is alive. Where there is real conviction of sin that man is sure to become dead to what he was. If he were before a profligate man, he now becomes a praying man; and if he were before a Pharisaic man, he now becomes, instead of being what he has been, a self-justiciary, a self-justifier, and a self-congratulating man, he will now become so sensible of the concupiscence of his heart, that he will become a broken-hearted man, a self-despairing man, a self-loathing man: he will be humbled down in the dust before God. And perhaps the holy scriptures refer to these two opposite characters where it is said, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:" at least this is one of the ways in which those words may be applied.

And so when a poor creature is picked up from the dunghill of profligacy, and turned into a praying man, that man may well rejoice in that he is raised up and the Pharisee who has been all along dreaming that his bits of morality would serve to meet the God who is a consuming fire, would serve to satisfy the eternal and fiery law of God, and help forward the poor creature's eternal welfare, he may now rejoice that he is made low. So that the other may rejoice that he is exalted into a knowledge of the truth of God, and the Pharisee may rejoice that he is made low; and I am sure that these two meeting together, may rejoice together in what God has done in raising the one up, and bringing the other down. But the chief point that I wish to enlarge upon here, is this, and I

think a very important point; that while it is essential we should have a conviction of our state as sinners, it does not at all matter by what means that conviction came into our minds. There is a great variety of things the Lord turns into arrows. A man may get into a pensive, moody state of mind, and think, well, I don't know; I am wandering about, and I don't feel altogether happy; I know I have never cared about God, nor cared about Christ, nor cared about eternity; after all, a Christian man must be the happiest man; and when the man begins to think like this, the Lord may turn that man's own thoughts into a kind of arrow, and all at once, he becomes very unhappy, very forlorn; he may try his old pursuits, but they do not do; he may try his old companions, but he will find that they do not feel as he feels, and he almost wonders they do not think as he thinks, for he does not know yet that it is the Lord; like Samuel, the Lord spoke three times to Samuel before Samuel knew that it was the Lord; he rose and went to Eli, and thought Eli had called him; but no, it was the Lord; but by-and-bye, Samuel was convinced that it was the Lord. That is one of the ways in which the Lord sometimes is pleased to fasten an arrow of conviction in the mind. Sometimes even the loss of a child. Why I have met instances of that; perhaps the parent, especially the mother, thinking of the child, the babe that is lost, where is it? Ah, it is in eternity; it is in the presence of its Maker. Is it saved or lost? Where is it? And perhaps these ruminations the Lord may turn into a kind of arrow, and fasten conviction in the mind, and she says to herself, It is where I soon must be; my child that is, as Erskine sings,

“Thither caught from womb and breast;
Claim right to sing above the rest,
Because it found the happy shore,
It never saw nor sought before.”

Where shall I be when the great Judge shall come? shall I see my departed babe on his right hand, and see myself on his left hand, and hear him say to those on his right hand, my own offspring among them, “Come, you blessed,” and say to me the parent on the left hand, “Depart, you cursed;” will that be my position? Perhaps it will. And the Lord turns that sometimes into an arrow of conviction, and such an one then becomes concerned for eternity, and in the Lord's own time will say, Ah, what a mercy the Lord meant to me in taking my poor child from me, or in taking my two or three children from me; what a mercy the Lord meant. I rebelled at the time, but now I see he has turned this into an arrow of conviction to my soul. Or sometimes the loss of a friend, of a husband, of a wife, or any other relative; the Lord very often turns this into an arrow of conviction, because he is pleased to impress under such circumstances upon the mind, the solemnity of death, and the uncertainty of all human hopes. How many instances have I seen of this. So that the Lord when he takes away a friend unexpectedly, be generally has under that some purpose we do not recognize at the time; but by-and-bye, when the Lord explains all his dealings with us we shall see that he had a purpose, of mercy where we amidst the cloudy apprehensions we had thought there was nothing but judgment.

So, it matters not, my hearer, what the means were, if you have but a conviction of your lost condition, And I shall speak if possible, more encouragingly than this presently. I could tell you a great many things the Lord turns into an arrow of conviction. I am aware the word of God usually is the means, but then it does not matter about the word itself being the means, providing your conviction leads you to the word; because the means that the Lord uses are in accordance with the scriptures. Now I have known men's own bad conduct sometimes turned into an arrow of

conviction; I have known instances; we had one before our church, as you are aware some of you a few church meetings ago, when two young men engaged to go out on Sunday, and swear all the oaths they could think of. These oaths were turned, the awfulness of it, into an arrow of conviction to the one; he was stopped, paralyzed, and could no longer go on; they were out in a field; but the other was not stopped; so was fulfilled what is written, "There shall be two in the field, one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." The Lord knows which of the two is ordained to eternal life: and that that he has made by eternal election his he will take care at the proper time to send an arrow into the heart, and such shall fall down at the footstool of his mercy. Then again others have said, Well, I do not know: people say a great deal against ministers, and against religious people, and against Christians; I begin to think, says such an one, that the people that so speak are not the best off after all, I should rather like to be a Christian; and he begins to be a little uneasy. There is no sudden conviction, no sudden terror; the arrow may enter the heart almost imperceptibly; the sharpest instrument sometimes gives the least pain and does the most work; the arrow may enter very gently, such an one may say, Well, I do not know I cannot look back to any particular time; I do not know how it was. I cannot see that I ever was convinced. Well but then if you are convinced now, suppose you begin to see a beauty in Christ, and in religion, an awfulness in sin, in the wrath of God; you begin to see the terribleness of being left to fall into the hands of the living God, and by degrees you become dissatisfied with yourself, and with the world, and your pursuits, and you begin to read the Bible, and hear the word of God, and you can hardly explain how you are like the wheat, where we read that the seed is cast into the ground, and it grows up, first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn, he knows not how, and so some Christians are grown up into the knowledge of the truth, and they hardly know how, all they can say is, I have had a conviction then, and a conviction now, I never saw myself a greater sinner than I am brought to feel now, but I cannot recollect the time. Never mind that, the Lord knows the time when the arrow entered your heart; you were somewhat unconscious of it, you were as it were in slumbering's on the bed, and the Lord sealed your instruction before you woke, and you knew not what was the matter, but it was to withdraw you from that path that would have led you to hell, it was to call your soul back from the pit and that you might be enlightened with the light of the living, and that you might be found at last among the saints in light. So never mind how, when I say never mind I am not saying that triflingly: I am saying merely that it is not essential whether you can recollect any time, or whatever the means was; the great point is, have you room in your heart for Jesus Christ? Can you say that you do now see and feel yourself to be that sinner, that nothing but grace can save you, and that you have no hope but in Jesus Christ, and in that mercy of God which is by him? Well then, the arrow has entered, and as I have said before, it is not essential as to what the means may be.

It would be endless to tell out the vast variety of ways in which the Lord is pleased to deal, lay affliction upon you, lay you on a bed of sickness; that has been turned into an arrow with some, and they have risen from their sick bed very different people from what they were when first laid on that sick bed. And sometimes loss of property, persons getting on well in the world, and by-and-bye some terribly calamitous circumstance takes place, and there is a great loss, and they fear there is nothing but the workhouse before them, and all at once the words of Job perhaps may strike them, or something like it: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;" ah, but I cannot say with Job, "Blessed be the name of the Lord;" the Lord had no business to take my property away like this. Ah, but it was not yours, it was only lent to you, friend, that is all. Think yourself well off for he has not dealt with you as he did with one of old. If in this loss of property you are

impressed with the right of the Most High to deprive you of what you possessed, and an arrow of conviction comes into your mind, and you feel, Ah, I am a sinner; for the first time in my life I see what a sinner I am; ah, what paltry things are silver and gold to immortal souls: what paltry things are the things of this world to depend upon; how true it is that riches make themselves wings and fly away; ah, if the Lord has thus dealt with you, and turned your loss into a conviction of your state, see how mercifully he has dealt with you to what he did with one of old. One of old said, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years eat, drink, take your ease." What did the Lord do in that case? Did he come in and take the man's property away? Did he come in and say, ah I hear your boasting of your gold, I will take it away from you and I will convince you of what you are as a sinner, and I will bring you to the footstool of my mercy: I will lead you into quite a new path altogether? Instead of the Lord doing this, he took the man away; "You fool, this night shall your soul be required of you." Ah, my hearer, Job might well say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord;" for as though he should say, he might have left me in a state of nature, given me all this property, come to me in the midst of my boasting of it and taken me away and sent me to hell for ever; but he has taken that away that he gave me; and that is not essential to my welfare; he has not taken himself away, for "I know that my Redeemer lives" he is my Redeemer, I know that he is mine, I know that he is my portion. Sometimes a word from a Christian friend. Ah, you speak a word sometimes in the sick room, or in a little casual conversation, you do not know what the consequence may be.

Vast then is that variety of ways in which the Lord is pleased to fasten the arrow of conviction in the mind. And then very, very often by the word itself; indeed, more by the word than by any other way. But I have made these remarks in order to encourage you, because many of the Lord's people are tried upon this: Have I come in the right way? Did it begin the right way? Well, you cannot be too careful upon that. The Lord forbid I should try to put you off with the semblance without the reality, with the mere name without the thing itself, with the mere form, without the power, this would be mere delusion. But all that I am contending for is that whatever might have been the means by which the Lord convinced you, or whether the conviction has gone on so gradually that you have stood all the time so far from Sinai that you have not as it were so heard its thunders, nor so seen its lightnings, nor so felt its trembling's as to experience any terror; and yet brought to feel that you are a poor corrupt creature, and that nothing but the blood of Christ can exempt you from condemnation, that nothing but his righteousness can justify you before God, and that if you are saved it must be entirely by his mercy. So then whatever the means were, if we are but brought, if the arrow of conviction has but entered the heart, whether suddenly from the bow of God's truth, whether from your own thoughts, whether from loss of friends, or property, or, affliction, or whatever may be the means, if the conviction be but there; then you are saved, for my text says, "Whereby the people fall under you." This is sure to be the effect, so that such persons it is literally impossible for them to remain prayerless any longer, their souls will secretly sigh, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Their souls will secretly ask, Shall I stand among his children at the last day? shall I be found at his right hand? Such will say to themselves, Well, either he is against me as a Judge, judging me according to my sin, or else he is for me by his dear Son; and if he judge me according to my sin, if he deals with me according to his holy law and my sins, then woe, woe, woe to me, and that to all eternity! would that I had never been born. But if, on the other hand, he is on my side by his dear Son, then whatever the Savior's atonement can entitle me to I shall have, whatever the Savior's righteousness can entitle me to I shall have, whatever the worth and worthiness of his name can entitle me to, I shall have. So that such cannot remain unconcerned

any longer for the things of eternity. Thus, then, perhaps I have said enough to try to explain this part of my subject. My object is to show the necessity of this personal wounding more or less, this personal conviction, so as to bring you down to pray for yourself as though there was not another person in all the world. Your concern is with yourself, your own soul, your own conduct, your own welfare. What would it be to you if all the world be saved, and you be lost? This becomes a personal matter. And when these persons come together, a number come together, what a decision there is for the truth then, what oneness. I do not at all wonder, for I do not see how it could be otherwise, that those of old who were pricked in the heart, and no doubt some were pierced with more pain than others, some felt more depth of conviction than others, but what do we read as the result? That they were together with one accord, and with one heart, and that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine; and their doctrine was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved;" their doctrine was, that it was by faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. They continued with one accord steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in prayer, continued to be praying people, breaking of bread, and were walking in the fear of the Lord, not in the fear of men, though there was much persecution abroad at that time, but in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

Second. But I notice in the next place, *the SURE effect*: "Whereby the people fall under you." I will now, in this next part of my subject, point out the person to whom they submit; because those of you that have had this conviction, in whatever way the Lord wrought that conviction, Ah, say you, that is my concern, whether he has wrought my conviction or not, well, you must tell me the effect. If you have no heart to submit to the person, I am about to point out to you, then I will say that your conviction is not of God; but if you have a heart to submit to him, then your conviction is of God. "Whereby the people fall under you." Who is this Person? First, he is a Person "fairer than the children of men," Jesus Christ, who had no sin.

"His life was pure without a spot,
And all his nature clean."

"And such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens, and is a merciful and faithful High Priest." But what is all this for? Why, to take your sin away. This holy Person came, and for your sins, without being defiled himself, without himself being tainted, he bares our sins, and put them away. But that is only one representation given of Christ. "Grace is poured into your lips." What was the grace poured into Christ's lips? Why, the covenant of grace. "This is my covenant with them; my words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says the Lord from henceforth and forever." I must again quote the words I enlarged upon on Friday evening; "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David," of the beloved. I said then, and I repeat it now, that the word David there has no allusion, I am inclined to think, to David at all; the word David signifies *beloved*, and you might render it, "even the sure mercies of the beloved." Now this covenant of grace was poured into Christ's lips by the Holy Spirit, he received this covenant, carried out this covenant, and when he had carried it out by his life, and was about to carry out the confirmation of it by his death, he appears with the cup of blessing, "This is my blood in the New Testament." Well, say you, what has this to do with my conviction? Is your conviction such that you can receive the same covenant? Perhaps you may not yet; some of you little ones understand what it means.

Well, friends, it means that his good will, his testamentary will, that he gave you to Christ before the world was, that he imputed your sins to Christ, and Christ's work to you, that he there and then settled and ordained you to eternal glory, and that he entered into a covenant, engaging to bring you to glory; and that that covenant, that sworn covenant, is by the Lord Jesus Christ. "The Lord has sworn and will not repent. You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Now are you offended with Jesus Christ as a holy Person? No, say you; for if he had sin, and I had sin, there would be no hope for me; but as he had no sin, and I have nothing but sin, there is hope for me. Very well, are you offended with him as the surety of the covenant; because this differs very materially from a false gospel; a false gospel either perverts the gospel, or denies it altogether; so that if your conviction be true, it will lead you into a submission to Christ as the surety of the covenant. "Grace is poured into your lips." And then mark, "Therefore God has blessed you forever." So that Christ himself could be blessed only by receiving the covenant of grace. He could not, I say it with reverence, he could not have been blessed out of God's order, and this the dear Savior well knew, and therefore he magnified and established the law, went to the end of that, confirmed the covenant, and he is blessed forever; and if you are blessed forever, it must be after the same order of things. Now if your conviction is real, it will bring you into submission to this, it will bring you to the understanding of it; you will see what this order of things is, and you will reject every gospel that is contrary to the purity of Christ, contrary to this eternal covenant, this grace which he received, and by which he is blessed forever and his people are as surely blessed forever as Christ is blessed forever, because they are one with him, he is one with them. Mark the words I have just now quoted; the words, that is the doctrine, the truths, that were put into the mouth of Christ by the Spirit are put into the mouth of his seed, they are brought to speak the same words; as he himself said, "The words you gave me have I given them," Ah, look at that; see the faithfulness of Jesus; the same doctrine; the same testimony you gave me in this New Testament, this new covenant, I have given unto them. And does he say that they would not receive them? Oh no; the arrow of conviction had made way for them in their hearts; they did receive them, bless the Lord, yes, and they retained them and retain them to this day; so that to this day the blood of the everlasting covenant is the theme of glorified spirits in heaven, and will be to all eternity. But again; the next representation of this Person is that he was not only holy and the Surety of the covenant, but also God. "Your throne O God." You will receive the testimony of the personal divinity of Jesus Christ. That is the doctrine I hold. I am a thorough Trinitarian; no eternal generationist can go further than myself in the doctrine of the distinct personalities of the Eternal Three; that God the Father is a purely Divine Person; that Jesus Christ in his divinity is a purely Divine Person; that the Holy Ghost in his divinity is a purely Divine Person; and that when it is said Christ travelled in the greatness of his strength, it must refer to his divinity; for in his manhood, he underwent weakness, but he had with him, at the same time an omnipotence that could accomplish salvation, for he was God and man in one Person. Here then the Father says to the Son, and the Son means his manhood, as referred to in a former part of this psalm; then we come to his divinity "Your throne, O God." Here, then, is the complexity of Christ, the suretyship character of Christ; and if your conviction be real, it will bring you to submit to this High Priest, this Surety and you will rejoice that he is God. I should think no man was ever happier, or ever felt his standing more firm, his prospects more brightened up, his heart more strengthened, or his soul more assured than Thomas, when he said, "My Lord and my God." If Christ had not been God, and merely man, he would have rebuked Thomas for this; but he let the testimony go, he did not attempt to soften it and therefore I rejoice that my Jesus is God, God over all, blessed for ever more. If your conviction be real, then, it will bring you thus to receive him as the Holy One of Israel, to receive

him as the Surety, and to receive him in his eternal divinity as Jehovah your Righteousness. Never, give up the doctrine of the Trinity; if you are wrong upon that, you will be wrong everywhere. The value, the worth, the efficacy of the work of Christ stands or falls with the personal divinity of Christ.

I do not hold the doctrine that some do, that the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice lies exclusively in the dignity of his person; it lies in two things, first in the dignity of his person, and, secondly, in what he actually endured. He was the Surety, and the efficiency of the Surety does not lie in his mere capability of paying the debt for which he is responsible, but in his actually doing so. "Feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." Thus, then, my hearer, if you are convinced of your state so as to receive Jesus Christ as the Holy One, to receive him as the Surety, to receive him as God, all I say is, God has done great things for you, for no man can know the Son as you know him except the Father reveal him unto you; no man can look at Jesus Christ as you look at him in these characters and say, "You are the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," if the Holy Spirit were not the teacher. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." How encouraging then is this to our hearts: we need encouragement, for there is plenty to discourage us in the religious world as well, as in the irreligious.

But again, this throne is forever; there is no uncertainty about his throne. The throne of David is gone, the throne of the Caesars is gone, the thrones of the Pharaohs, and Nebuchadnezzars, and Sennacheribs are gone. But the throne of Jesus remains unshaken, his kingdom unmoved and immovable; he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. "The scepter of your kingdom is a right scepter, that is, it is right that he should reign; he has acquired that position, he has acquired right to reign. Christ's right to reign is founded in the perfection of his work. I always ought to be careful, and so ought every one, to avoid speaking irreverently, but I was going to say Christ would have no right to reign over sin in a way of pardon of it and deliverance from it if he himself had not mediocrally conquered it. He would have no right to take us from the law and its curse, unless he had magnified that law and endured its curse. He would have no right to introduce us to heaven unless he could present us sinless and righteous. Well now, he has done all this, and therefore his scepter is a right scepter he has a right to his people, he has a right to bring them before God because he will bring them without fault, without wrinkle, without spot, without blemish.

Then there is a fourfold sense in which this Person loved righteousness and hated wickedness. First, naturally. Just the reverse of ourselves we by nature love sin, and hate righteousness, especially gospel righteousness, the carnal mind is enmity against gospel righteousness, because it is in league with hell, there is nothing the devil so much hates as the perfect work of Christ, that is the light that he is always afraid will shine into the hearts of poor sinners. But Jesus Christ naturally, for he was holy, hated wickedness and loved righteousness; as I sometimes say, his very flesh and blood cried out for God, and our flesh and blood cry out against God. That is one sense in which he loved righteousness, and hated wickedness.

Secondly, he loved righteousness and hated wickedness *substitutionally*; that is, he loved righteousness for you, fulfilled the law for you, for love is the fulfilling of the law; and he hated, sin for you and hated it with a hatred that you can never attain to; he hated it with an infinite hatred, with an unexceptionable hatred, and that is what you cannot do; he loved righteousness with an

unexceptionable love, and that is what even the saint cannot do. Thirdly, he, loved righteousness and hated wickedness *regally*. It was the business of a king of Israel to keep all false gods out of the land, put them down, and maintain the worship of God, and the liberty of the people of God in that land. Fourthly, he loves righteousness, and hates wickedness *executively*.