

NO TRUTH, NO SALVATION

A SERMON

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**“For I say unto you, You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say,
Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.” Matthew 23:39**

THE Lord Jesus Christ was under no less than three different orders of law and dispensation. In the first place, he was under the law of ten commandments, as our substitute, to fulfil that law for us, and to atone for sin, and which sin could be measured only by what the law of God is. Jesus Christ, then, was under that law as a substitute. And then, secondly, he was under the covenant dispensation of the Jews. Hence, as a Jew, he was circumcised, and became a debtor to that ceremonial law as a Jew considered. And the Lord Jesus Christ, as man, did some things among the Jews, on the ground of their covenant relationship to God; and therefore, in doing these things on the ground of their covenant relationship to God, he underwent hindrances. And hence faith was essential even to temporal healing. Hence you read, that when the Savior was standing upon the ground of a temporal and a conditional covenant, he could, not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief; and it was in the language of that covenant that the Savior said to the Jewish nation, “Repent, and believe the gospel;” and it was their duty so to do, and to come into that dispensation which was put into the place, in a certain sense, of the dispensation they were under. Now the Savior as man had, like all his people, only he in perfection, and we, perhaps, only partially, a good feeling towards men in general, and especially towards his own countrymen; so that he would, as far as his own feelings were concerned as man, he would have reformed the Jews, and have cast out their traditions, and have brought them into such submission to the dispensation of Heaven, that the Jewish nation would have escaped that destruction which came upon them. But then, this old covenant ground, upon which the Savior stood, as man, in these matters, and the new covenant, that I will make an observation upon presently, were very different premises. “How often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings; and you would not!” Here, you see, Christ was hindered from doing what he would, as man, have done; but then, he had to do it on old-covenant ground, and if they did not choose to obey, Christ must undergo the hindrance; yes, the living God himself had undergone hindrances in that covenant, because, that covenant being conditional, when the people ceased to perform the conditions of that covenant, then the Lord could not, consistently with that covenant, do anything more for them. And so here, if the rulers would not allow the people peacefully to assemble and listen to the Savior, the Savior was not commissioned to make them do so; he was not

commissioned to compel them to do so. He would thus have gathered them together and have saved them from temporal destruction; but they would not. Therefore, taking this view of the matter, then Christ, as man, underwent in that covenant hindrances; and our text forms a part of the conclusion at which he arrives in relation to the Jewish nation: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate;" never again to be re-established that, at least, is my opinion. There is not a sentence in all the New Testament that authorizes the idea of the Jews ever being gathered in; and it is even a problem whether, as a people, they, will ever even he nominally converted to Christianity at all. The more I look into the New Testament upon this matter, the more I see men are in error in assuming what the New Testament nowhere confirms. Now then, you must distinguish between these things, namely, that Jesus Christ was under the law to redeem them that were under the law; there he appears as a substitute. Second, that he stood upon old-covenant ground, and did many things conditionally; there he underwent hindrances. But then, thirdly, while the Lord Jesus Christ was under the law as our substitute, and while he stood upon old-covenant ground, as a Jew considered, and as their ruler and king, for by virtue of royal descent he was king of the Jews, though for our sakes he gave up those riches, gave up all that royalty and splendor which he might have had, and became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, but then, thirdly, while the Savior was under the law, and also stood upon old-covenant ground, there is a third and an ultimate order of things in which he stood, and that is in the new covenant, which he has sealed with his blood. In this new covenant, he undergoes no hindrances. If he wants the people, to gather them together, he will gather them; and if he wants to bring in a sheep, he will bring him; and if he wants a Lazarus out of the grave, he will bring him; and if he wants to bring a Saul of Tarsus down, and break the neck of his pride, and give him a broken heart, and raise him up into the knowledge of the truth, and turn him into an apostle of the Gentiles, he will do it. So, then, Christ underwent no hindrances in the new covenant. There his commission was, by his atoning blood, to put all hindrances out of the way; and who is there, in this new covenant, that shall hinder him? Now, for want of this distinction of the relations in which the Savior stood, men blend things all together, and give us such a confused representation of Jesus Christ, that it is as common as possible now for the Savior to be represented as trying to do what he cannot do; as trying to save everybody, and can't do it. Why, the Savior never attempted at it; he came to save that which was lost, and he did save it; he came to lay down his life for the sheep, and he did that which he came to do; and he has ascended up on high, to govern the nations upon earth, and to take out from among those nations a people that are given to him, and that he will do. Thus, then, you will see the difference between these dispensations; and then you will understand easily the meaning of the Savior, when he says, "How often would I have gathered your children together!" not, I would save them; not, I am come to die for them, and they would not let me; not, I would regenerate them, and they would not let me; no, the Savior's object in relation to those people was not spiritual or eternal salvation, but merely temporal preservation from the judgments they had entailed; but as they confirmed themselves in those judgments, their house was left desolate, and here stands the declaration, "You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." The idea, I may just name before I enter upon the subject, is this, Here is a connection, an inseparable connection, between the gospel of God and the Christ of God; and you shall not see me, in the sense here intended, so as to be saved by me, until my gospel be acceptable to you; and when my gospel becomes acceptable to you, and you shall say, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord", as soon as you go thus far, then you shall see me; then everything shall be well. Now, this is the footing upon which the Savior put this matter; and we read afterwards, and I suppose it is equally true now, that amidst the ministrations of the apostles, "as

many as were ordained to eternal life believed;” that which was true then is true now, and will be true to the end of time, that “the election has obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”

I shall therefore, this morning try to describe, first, *the recognition of the gospel*, what it is to recognize the gospel of Christ; and then, secondly, *that such persons shall say, with Thomas, in the Lord’s own time, “my Lord and my God.”*

I notice, then, first, *the recognition of the gospel*. Now, as our text is a quotation from the 118th Psalm, I will take the suggestions of the latter part of the 118th Psalm by which to set before you this morning what appears to me to be the gospel of God. First, *The gate of righteousness*; secondly, *the corner stone, or consecration to God*; there is, third, *a day, a peculiar day, which the Lord has made*; there is, fourth, *sacrificial excellency and sacrificial responsibility*. These are the things there presented, which, I think, will give us a fair epitome of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. First, then, it is there said, for the Savior is evidently the speaker in the 118th Psalm, the Savior says, “Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord.” I am inclined to think that the gates of righteousness there mean the ten commandments. There was not one of the ten commandments by which the Savior could not have access to God. Being so holy in his nature, and being everything that the law of God could demand, all that that magnified the law, he could have access to God by his, own personal excellency, by every one of the ten commandments. Whereas I could show, which I will not do this morning, having other matters to advance, or else I could easily show, one by one, how every one of the ten commandments shut us out from God. But these commandments, which shut us out from God were to Christ as gates of righteousness. He entered by each, by an obedience that entitled him to access to God and has thus magnified the law. Now, in the next verse, we have the singular spoken of: “This gate of the Lord,” as though it should say, while he could enter into the presence of God by his own excellency and personal obedience by every one of the ten commandments of the law, the people, for whom he did this, cannot enter by any one of those commandments. But Christ himself, who did thus enter into the holy of holies by his own atoning excellency, by his own blood, he himself has become unto us the way of access to God, this “gate of the Lord,” into which the righteous shall enter. Just see the beauty of it; and I would, I could speak of it without distorting it. I have just hinted that the dear Savior entered by the ten commandments; that each commandment was a gate of righteousness; that he was adequate, in his holiness and obedience, to what every commandment demanded. And then the people for whom he did this are, in the very next verse, called righteous. “This gate”, Christ is the gate, “of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.” So, my hearer, how do we become righteous? Why, in receiving what Christ has done. Let us ask the question, “Is it not our very life, our very hope, our very delight? Are we not this morning come together for the very purpose of hearing what Christ has done?” So, then, this is the gospel. “The righteous.” How are we righteous? We are righteous by what he has done. He has entered into fellowship with God by every one of the commandments. He is the end of the law, and the end of sin; and this, to us, is the gospel. This is the joyful sound. It comes to us every way suited to us; and blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes this righteousness, because it is that by which sin is taken away. Now here is the gospel; and the man who is brought to recognize the work of Jesus Christ, brought to recognize him as the end of the law, he shall see Jesus Christ; he shall see God; he shall see heaven; he shall see, and possess, and enjoy, all that he can wish or desire; yes, even abundantly more than he can either ask or think. There is, therefore, a great beauty in looking at the recognition of the gospel, as being inseparably connected with seeing God as your

God. And this is evidently the meaning of the Savior, "You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." And the man who comes vitally and truly by this righteousness of Jesus Christ, and sounds out to us what Christ has done, we do say of such an one, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings these good tidings; that publishes this peace that is made by Jesus Christ; that publishes good tidings of good things, and that says unto Zion, Your God reigns!" That is, he reigns by Christ's righteousness to our eternal justification and glorification; for whom he justifies, them he also glorifies. "Your God reigns;" that is, he reigns here in the exceeding riches of his grace, to pardon, preserve, and bless us, and bring us off safe at last.

Now this is what the Jews were ignorant of; and this is what the professing world at large enter but very little into. They are so busied about their own doings that they seem to have but little of that spirit described in the 111th Psalm, that "the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." And the Lord will make his people feel that there is no unbroken cistern, there is no infallible spring, no infallible consolation anywhere, but in the works that he has wrought, the wonders that he has done. Again, these people that are thus righteous by faith in Christ, are said to enter in by a gate. Now, you read of a strait gate: "Strait is the gate." And what is the strait gate but Christ himself? That is the strait gate; and a very difficult gate it is to enter in by, and yet very easy; very difficult, and yet very easy. No rich man ever entered by it yet, or ever will. Well, say you, don't say that. Yes, I will say it; but I must say it spiritually, and not temporally: for neither riches nor poverty have anything to do with our eternal welfare. A man may be a very poor man, and yet a very ungodly man; and a man may be a very rich man, and yet a very godly man; and so a man may be a very poor man, and yet a very godly man, and a man may be a very rich man, and yet a very ungodly man. Therefore my meaning is, that a sinner must be stripped of all his supposed holiness, righteousness, strength, and confidence; in fact, he must be brought down so low as to say this: "Well, if ever I appear before God with acceptance, it must be by the perfection of Christ's atonement; and if ever I appear before God righteous, it must be by Christ's righteousness; and if ever I see God's face with joy, it must be by a victory given unto me; not a victory that I can gain by anything I can do, but a victory given unto me, and that Christ has wrought the victory." Some of us had to undergo a great deal of discipline before we were brought down low enough, made poor enough and needy enough to enter in at this strait gate; and now, since we have been made poor, the gate is as easy to us as can be. It is no longer to us as a strait gate that is difficult; no, nothing else will do at all. At one time, the Savior's yoke did not fit us at all well; but a free-grace yoke fits us now very nicely. Now this gate, then, of Christ's finished work is that strait gate, is that narrow way into which the righteous shall enter. You see they receive his righteousness in the declaration of it, and in the belief of it.

Here, then, is that strait, difficult gate to flesh and blood, and difficult to the world, but not to the man who has once been brought to it; and it is that narrow way that all others must be rejected; nothing else must be admitted; Christ in this matter must be all in all. Blessed is he, then, that comes and shows unto us what Christ has done; blessed is he that comes and shows unto us Christ as the gate of heaven. If this gospel has a place in our hearts, why, then, the Lord has a place there. You may be as full of doubts and fears as you can hold, and say, Ah, yes, I can receive these tidings; I can say, Blessed is the man that brings these tidings; I can say, Blessed, be the Lord for such tidings, but I cannot for a moment think that I am a Christian. Ah! but if you are brought to see these tidings as good tidings, and to receive them as your only hope, then you are a Christian,

whether you think so or not; that is, if you have a heart to receive them; not to receive them merely into your head, and say, Well, it is my opinion, and my opinion, and my opinion. No; I do not mean that; I mean something more than that; I mean, if you feel that you are a poor, lost sinner, and that these truths have a place in your heart; that you receive them in the love of them; that you can hear nothing, sanction nothing, listen to nothing that is contrary to them; this is what I mean. Then, if you are brought thus far, however you may doubt and fear, and though you are not yet sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, and though your prison doors be not yet opened and though the blood itself in its efficacy has not yet reached you to bring you up out of the pit, wherein is no water, yet it will do so; for so sure as the gospel is made dear to you, you shall have by-and-bye, in happy possession, all that that gospel promises; for “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;” and if it is not hidden from you, you are not lost. And this is an evidence that we ought not to lose sight of. It is an evidence that has comforted me times out of number; when clouds have gathered over my soul, when the enemy has come in like a flood, and when shafts of infidelity have been sent to my very heart, and seemed to make me exclaim, like the prophet, “My hope and strength are perished from the Lord,” I begin to look about and say, Well, but I know the way, I know the gospel; I love the God of the gospel, and I love the gospel of God; I can see the gospel, I can see the order of it, and I love it. Well, then, says the apostle, “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;” it is not hidden from me; and I can turn round sometimes in a dark season, when I have no sensible comfort, and say, Satan, you are a liar, telling me I shall not be saved, and telling me I am not born of God, and not a Christian. If I were not a Christian, I could not recognize this gospel, nor say, “Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord,” in this gospel, free grace, vital, and true sense of the word.

Again, in that same Psalm, we have consecration to God. “The stone which was set at nothing of you builders is become the head of the corner;” think to build up a church without Christ. Now consecration is the chief thing there intended. In ancient times, as you see in the 51st of Jeremiah, as well as from some other hints in the Scriptures, when persons were about to erect any building for purposes of great importance, they would take a stone from some great city, in order to enlist on their side the god or gods of that city. They reasoned thus: The god or gods of that city have given to that city and empire, as in the case of Babylon, such prosperity; if we take a stone from that city, and make it the corner-stone of this building, those same gods that have caused that city and empire so to prosper will take care of this building. Now this is the heathen idea of it. But then the Scriptures do sometimes consecrate heathen customs for the illustration of eternal things. Now, then, God was determined to have a building, and he took a stone from heaven itself; Christ is of God; and he took this stone; and by this corner stone, Christ Jesus, God is with the building, God takes care of the building. And Christ knew the delight that the Father had in this building, and therefore said, “Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” I do not know whether the excellency of this strikes you or not, it does my mind, that the gods of these prosperous empires would take care of the building on the ground of their having a stone belonging to that empire as the corner stone of this building. Now, then, Christ becomes the pledge that God will take care of us, that God dwells by us. He does not dwell by the building on the ground of the excellency of the building, or any merit or worth in the materials of the building, but simply by the corner stone. Here am I, as worthless a sinner as ever walked; but then if I am a believer in this Corner Stone, if I am a believer in Christ, if I receive him, then by Christ. Jesus God dwells with me, and loves me with the same love he loves Christ, and will take the same care of me that he took of the infant nature of Christ, and will keep us as the apple of his eye. Oh! the

thought is sweet, to think that God will deal with us exclusively by the worth and worthiness of his dear Son. That man does not understand the gospel that speaks of the Lord being with his new covenant people today, and forsaking them tomorrow; that man does not understand the tie that unites the two, it is by Christ Jesus. Hence that long list the apostle gives of tribulations, and perils, and various circumstances. "What of all these?" he says. "Who shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus?" Now, then, the man that comes and tells me that it is Jesus Christ who died, the just for the unjust, to bring me to God, and that by Jesus Christ I am with God, and that by Jesus Christ God is with me, and that God deals with me not according to any worth or worthiness in me, but deals with me according to the worth and worthiness of his dear Son, why, this endears the Savior, endears the Father, endears the Holy Spirit, endears the gospel, endears God altogether, and brings in very sweetly before me that sweet declaration we never seem weary of repeating, that he has sworn that he will not be wrath with us nor rebuke us. The great secret of that is the infinite sufficiency of the atonement of Jesus Christ: he having suffered all the curse that sin could entail, he having suffered all the penalty, the work is done. This is the Corner Stone. And yet this is the Corner Stone that the ancient and thousands of modern builders reject. But God never was with a man to salvation, God was never with a man yet to eternal salvation in any way but by Christ Jesus the Lord. Here, then, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." Here am I, apart from God, and my sins lie between me and God; but Christ comes in and dwells just where my sins were, just where wrath was, for sin, and wrath, and death, and hell were between me and God; Christ comes in and dwells there; out goes my sin, to come in no more; out goes the curse, to come in no more; out goes Satan, to come in no more; out goes death, to come in no more; hell itself, as far as I am concerned, is extinguished, to be hell no more. Here is my heaven between me and God; here I am one with God, and God one with me; here I am eternally safe.

Nothing short of this gospel can save the soul; and if ever you would see God's face with joy, you must first understand this gospel; you must first be an approver and receiver of this gospel. To love God, and hate his truth, is what never was accepted in his sight yet, and never will, **That man that professes to hope in God, and yet makes light of his truth, never was a saved man, and never, in that state, can be.** Here, then, is the corner stone. The reason we are afraid so much of the troubles of life is because we have not more understanding of this matter; and even afraid of death, just as though there was anything in death could hurt us. Why, what is there in death? Nothing to hurt us. David calls it a shadow; and Paul calls it falling asleep; and Peter calls it putting off this tabernacle: in another place it is called departing; and good old Jacob took it so calmly and easily, after he had said what he had to say, he drew up his feet into his bed and gave up the ghost, as comfortable as ever he was in his life, and no doubt more so; for he saw he was got to the end, to his last struggle, and all was well; he knew he should see the Lord's face with joy. And then, in that 118th Psalm, we have daylight. "This is the day which the Lord has made." What a beautiful contrast is that to the law of God! As we sometimes say, In hell there is no day, in heaven there is no night. Now, the Lord has made a day. I understand that to mean many things. He made a day, put an end to night, by the constitution of his dear Son. Jesus Christ became a complex person; took upon him the seed of Abraham, that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. That is one step towards putting an end to the night that we are under by sin and wrath, and the curse. Second, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is another step in constituting this day. Third, "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is another step towards the making of day. Well, now, just test all these three points. First, as to the person of

Christ; he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; it is, therefore, an everlasting day. Second, as to the work of Christ; the heavens and the earth may pass away, but his righteousness shall not pass away, his salvation shall not be abolished; the day, therefore, is forever. Third, that the Holy Spirit begins the work in the soul; it is the dawn of eternal light; we shall never be in the dark again. In the dark we may be as to soul enjoyment, but in the darkness of ignorance, of enmity against the gospel, we never shall be again. Now, then, the man who loves this corner stone will see it to be the way in which the building is safe; the way in which God dwells with the building; the way in which the building shall be completed; the top stone shall be brought home by the same sort of favor as the foundation was laid, namely, with grace, shouting "Grace, and grace unto it." And then, "The Lord shall be unto you your everlasting light, and your God your glory; the days of your mourning shall be ended." Are you in darkness in providence? The Lord says he will never leave nor forsake you; that is to be your light. Your path may seem like the prophet's, crooked, first to the right, and then to the left; and every turn that his providence takes may seem to threaten your ruin. You may be like Jeremiah when he said, "He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He has turned aside my ways and pulled me in pieces." But if you follow Jeremiah through that 3rd chapter of Lamentations, you will find before the end, instead of his being torn to pieces he was put together; instead of being killed he was made alive; instead of being sunk into despair he was raised up into assurance in the Lord; for he says, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I hope in him." And then, spiritually also, he is our light. It is very sweet to leave matters with him, and watch his hand; and just so sure as we are favored to do so we shall find that God is our light, and in him is no darkness at all. Although many clouds may at times apparently surround us, yet when we can rise into a little enjoyment, we then see and know, and bless the Lord for the prospective truth that eternal sunshine must settle upon our heads. See the importance in these matters of the gospel of God. "You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

But one more idea, and that is this, that Christ is also represented in that 118th Psalm in his sacrificial responsibility. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Is not this to represent the covenant responsibilities of Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ came into this world, and there was upon him that responsibility that belonged to us. He was responsible for the honors of the law, for all our sins, for our souls; he was, and is, responsible for our persons; he was responsible to God for that image of God which we lost. Our responsibility lies in two things; we are responsible to God for perfect obedience to the law; we are responsible to God for that image of God which by sin we lost; and no man can answer this responsibility. But Christ took both: bless his holy name; and he has fulfilled his responsibilities. And hence, in looking at the solemnities of his death he felt the force of this when he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar;" the sacrifice, of course, a type of Christ's sacrificial excellency, and the cords a figure of his suretyship responsibility; and he still stands responsible for the people. And if you are acquainted with your responsibility, and see this surety to be the release from that responsibility, you will have no bad account to give to God; you will have a good account to give, because it will be an account of what he has done. Those responsibilities which Christ has borne he still sustains; that is to say, while he was responsible for the accomplishing of what the Father gave him to do, he has done that, but then he is still responsible for the welfare of the people. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring." Only there is nothing unpleasant to him in his present responsibilities; they are delightful to him; he feels bound by the

eternal love of his heart to gather his people in and present them at the last without spot, fault, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Now, let us hear what the Holy Ghost says upon this in a way of attracting poor sinners to God. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Ah, dear Jesus, did you take my tremendous responsibility, and terminate that responsibility, with your own heart's blood? and have you ascended up on high? and are you responsible for the sheep? and does it lie not with me, but with you, you exalted Redeemer, to present me at last as pure as you are pure, righteous as you are righteous, spotless as you are spotless? This will draw the poor sinner. "And I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws," ah! no longer famine, bondage, starvation; "and I laid meat unto them."

Now, if I thus receive the gospel, then I shall see him. You shall not see me without this. When the Savior sent his apostles, he said, If they do not receive your message, they will not have me; and if they receive you, they receive me; and if they receive me, they receive him that sent me. Now I can merely enumerate the points indicated in the other part. "You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is he that comes' in the name of the Lord." True gospel ministers in this world are a kind of pearls cast before swine, and there are plenty of swinish minds ready to belabor them, and to degrade them, and to despise them; but why do they do so? Because they know not the truth; they know not Jesus Christ; they know not what they do. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit;" therefore they go blindly on. And it is for true gospel ministers and good people to bear it patiently and quietly, knowing it is grace that makes us to differ; that we were once where they now are; there we still should have been, but for Almighty mercy opening our eyes, and bringing us to know these things. "You shall not see me."

I shall just enumerate, in conclusion, a sample of the things implied. First, approbation. Until you receive this gospel, you shall not be approved of by me. Hence, when Joash, the king of Israel, wished to see Elisha, that king standing opposed to God's truth, Elisha said: "Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward you, nor see you." There is no common ground for us to meet upon; you are not a receiver of God's truth. Secondly, reconciliation. There shall be no reconciliation established between us until your enmity against my truth has ceased.

When you are a lover of my truth, then we can meet upon that ground, and we will be reconciled. I will never say I am Joseph your brother until your pride is broken, and you are brought to acknowledge the truth of my dreams and visions. They despised Joseph's dreams and visions; but the time came when they submitted to them.