

THE CHURCH OF GOD AND THE FALL OF ANGELS

A SERMON

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“And I will put enmity between you and the woman.” Genesis 3:15

VERY concise is the history of eternal things between the creation and the flood; so that men suppose that antediluvian believers were acquainted with only that which we can learn from the concise history; that those men knew comparatively little of the counsel of God, or of the Christ of God, or of the salvation of God, or of the immortality of the soul, or of the majesty of God's law, or of God's covenant, or of the resurrection at the last great day. This is their, inference, and they build all sorts of errors upon that inference, errors which I will not now attempt to meddle with. But we see by a little careful searching of the Scriptures, that men who infer that that which is recorded between the creation and the flood is all that the antediluvians had to teach them, we see that such men are wrong in that inference, and that the antediluvians had very much larger revelations than those that are put upon record, and that are come down unto us. For instance, you read in the Book of Jude of the prophecy of Enoch; you do not get that prophecy on record. That one circumstance shows that Enoch was acquainted with the ultimate judgment, with the ultimate resurrection of the church on the one hand, and of the wicked on the other, together. Take that hint. And then take the hint in the Hebrews concerning Abel, that Abel was a believer surely, not merely in the literal lamb that he offered, but in the antitypical sacrifice, Christ Jesus. And no man, while I have the Bible before me, and the little experience I have thereof, shall ever persuade me that either Enoch or any other man could walk much with God without being well versed in the counsels of God, and well acquainted with all those things that pertained to his eternal welfare. But the Lord was determined to give us a limited book, a book quite large enough; and the Scriptures are perfect; yet thousands of things are suppressed; a great many things have been written, which the ancients had the advantage of, which are not come down to us. You read of the book of Jasher; but where is that book of Jasher now? It is lost; it is put aside. And we find that the history of the kings of Judah is but an abridgment from their larger existing records; and you find that the Proverbs are but an epitome of the vast number of proverbs that the ancients had the advantage of. For instance, it is said that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, while we have nothing like three thousand proverbs on record. And even the New Testament itself, the four Gospels especially, is a mere abridgment of what the Savior did; for there is only a small part of what he said and did written in the four Gospels. Now, the last book in the New Testament is a kind of exception to this rule; for the book of the Revelation is a whole, and a complete record of what was revealed to John; there was nothing there to abridge. So, then, if you take this into

consideration you must not suppose that the ancients got to heaven without knowing much of Christ; that the antediluvians got to heaven without knowing the counsels of God, or without understanding what was meant by the promised seed, or without understanding the new covenant, without understanding the great subject of the complexity of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe it would be well for us if we knew as much as these antediluvians did. Take Abel; think you that we know as much as he did, all of us? I think not. There are some of you that have been seeking to know whether your sins are forgiven you or not, and whether you really are accepted in Christ or not; you have not attained to that as yet; therefore, Abel was before you, for he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and he being dead yet speaks. Then again, you have sought to walk with God; you have not been yet favored to do so as you would wish; but Enoch walked with God. And then, again, Noah (for though he was a postdiluvian in one sense, yet he was an antediluvian in another), he had grace by which he could give up all his worldly possessions, and devote himself to the great matter even of a temporal salvation, a type, as Peter shows, of a greater salvation; must not lose sight of this, that Noah, no doubt, had a great deal to give up, and if unbelief could have gained the mastery, unbelief would have said, Oh, such a flood will never come; such a destruction will never come; I would never give up my fields, and my estates, and my business, and my building, and my various worldly interests, and devote all my time, and mind, and thoughts, and powers, just to the one object of building an ark; I would not do it. But then the Lord blessed him with unerring wisdom and blessed him with a divine faith; so that, by that divine faith, he achieved what he did. I make these two or three remarks by way of introduction to our subject, then, because they may be useful to some. Just take the hints, then, that the ancients got to heaven by the same knowledge of Christ that we now have; that they got to heaven by the same Jesus Christ; that they were saved by the same faith, by the same Spirit, by the same gospel, by the same grace, by the same covenant. Hence, then, it is the one common salvation, common to all the saints of God; the one common faith, common to all who have been and shall be saved.

Now our text, of course, must be understood mystically, though I am fully aware that the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of as, and that he was, the seed of the woman, literally. And in connection with that circumstance there is one of the greatest scriptures in all the Bible, in connection with Christ being the seed of the woman literally. "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, God with us." There is not a greater scripture in the Bible, "God with us." There is the Son of Mary declared in his sonship and in his absolute Deity. I will not, this morning, meddle with the other parts of the verse. But while the Savior is thus spoken of as the seed of the woman, literally so, in the 12th of the Revelation you find he is there spoken of as the offspring of the woman mystically; he is brought forth there mystically: that we have dwelt upon in times past; so that I need not use any arguments, or even scriptures, to show, because the truth is self-evident, that the church is again and again in the Holy Scriptures spoken of as a woman. And this morning we shall have to notice her in the character of the Lamb's bride, a woman. Now, in so doing, then, there are three things in our text we may notice. First, *the woman*; second, *the serpent*; and third, *the mutual enmity*, "I will put enmity between you and the woman."

I trust it will not be unprofitable for us to dwell a few moments, then, upon the various relations in which the church thus appears as a woman, as the Lamb's bride. In the first place, she is a divinely loved woman; loved with an everlasting love. And the chief point I dwell upon here for a minute

or two is, to show the freeness of the love wherewith the church is loved. First, if we look at the people, if I may take away the simile for a moment, that of a woman, and take it in the distributive and general sense, and take the people in the distributive form; look at it then. Let us, in the first place, see in how many respects, yes, in every respect, the love of God is free. First, if you look at the creature merely as a creature, apart from sin, is it not an act of infinite condescension for the Creator, the Self-existent, the Almighty, the Everlasting God, he who is from everlasting to everlasting, even apart from sin considered, and looking at the infinity of disproportion between the Creator and the creature, must it not be free love for the Lord to set his love upon you, to love you with an eternal love?

Look at the infinite disproportion between the Creator and the creature. It is therefore free, if looked at in this relation. And then, second, if you take into account our sinful state, our state by nature, that we have sinned against him, that we are infinitely loathsome as sinners unto his infinite purity, and obnoxious to his justice, and that he might justly have banished us into everlasting woe; but instead of doing this,

“He saw us ruined in the fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all.”

Hence the Scriptures delight to dwell upon this theme, that “God commends his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Here, then, is the freeness of his love. And then if you look at the death, in the third place, of the Lord Jesus Christ, was it not free love there? Was there anything in us, was there anything in the world, was there anything anywhere that could at all attract him, or at all entitle such poor creatures as we are to that infinite act of mercy in laying down his precious life for us? Is there any conditionality here? Does not the gospel here, as in all other departments, scorn conditions and breathe salvation free as air? How free was his love then! Then if we look at it in the fourth place, in its manifestation to us; when the apostle says, “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins;” there again is the freeness of his love. And then if you look at the ultimate provision this love has made, that life which it has provided, together with the eternal glory associated with that life, how the freeness of this love again appears! And then if you look at the certainty of this love, that it continues with infallible certainty, all these things show the freeness of his love. And if we know him thus, in his condescension, to set his heart upon us, as creatures; and then, if we know something of him, in setting his heart upon us, notwithstanding our being sinners then, if we know something of Jesus, who has, in carrying out the freeness of this love, thus laid down his life, and obtained eternal redemption; and then if we look back at our state by nature, and see how the Lord met with us, and preserved us, and brought us out of that state, and reconciled us to himself; and then if we look forward to the home we have to go to, the land, we have to go to, and the state in which we shall stand eternally associated, all declare both the freeness and the greatness of the love of God. Here, then, is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us. And it is a delightful truth that the man who is brought to feel his need of these testimonies does by that very circumstance prove that he is an object of this love. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” or the spiritually poor, that need such love and such mercy as this. And the man who is not offended with the Mediator, but is pleased with him in carrying out such love as this, that man does thereby prove that he himself is an object of this love; for this is the very thing against which the serpent is enmity, and against which all are enmity that are not taught of God. Here, then, is love. So, then,

the church is a loved church. Where, then, can you get any conditionality? Not in the fixation of God's love upon us as creatures", the infinite disproportion between the Creator and the creature would forbid the thought of conditionality. Then if you look at us as sinners, can you get any conditionality there? Anything but that. And then if you look at Calvary's cross, did Jesus die conditionally? Did he not die entirely on the ground of the Father's love and the Father's will, and by his own love wherewith he loved us? And then if you come to us ourselves when we were in a state of nature, was there any conditionality in that? Did not the Lord find us in a desert land, in a waste howling wilderness? Did he not find us spiritually as the 16th of Ezekiel represents the infant literally, find us as it were cast into the open field, no hand to help, no eye to pity, and no heart to sympathize with us? and he passed by us when we were in that polluted and loathsome state, and said unto us, "Live;" and he says, "I spread my skirt over you, and I entered into a covenant with you, and it was a time of love, and you became mine." Here, then, my hearer, the more we know of the freeness of the love of God, the more freely we shall love this God, and the more freely we shall love Jesus Christ, and the more freely we shall receive the truth, and the more we shall glory in this amazing love of God. Secondly, this mystic woman or church is not only a loved church, but also a chosen church; chosen, and put into eternal oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Holy Scriptures show us that this choice was before the world was. And it really seems almost too much to say, but still the Holy Scriptures authorize us to say it, it is saying very great things when we do say it, that this church was constituted one with Christ before the world was; and by virtue of that relationship, formed in eternity, the Lord having chosen the church for Christ, and chosen Christ for the church, and constituted them one by virtue of this relationship the husband, for he stood as the husband in this covenantly constituted order of things, was responsible for the church, let her do whatever she may. If she fall into sin, which she did in common with the others in the fall, Christ is responsible for that fall; and if there be practical sin when she comes personally into existence, Christ is responsible for those sins; and whatever breaches she may make in God's law, Christ is responsible for those breaches; and whatever wrath she may entail, that wrath comes upon him; and whatever be the debt she might incur, the husband is called upon to answer for that debt. He did indeed stand thus her husband and her surety in the counsels of eternity. The reason that men do not love the great truth of eternal election, the reasons rather are, first, because they do not feel their need of it; secondly, because they do not see the essentiality of it; third, because they do not see the beauty of it; fourth, because they know nothing of the advantages of it. But the man that is led into this great truth, he feels as assured as he does of his own existence, that if the Lord had not saved him after this order, he never could have been saved at all. And in entire accordance with this eternal choice in Christ Jesus, and indeed in illustration of it, the Lord carries it out thus; "I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness." In what righteousness? Why, in his own righteousness, in that righteousness which he should work out. "And in judgment." In what judgment? Why, according to the best of his judgment; he did it with judgment, and when a thing is done with a perfection of judgment, you never afterwards repent of having done it; but when a thing is done partly in judgment and partly in ignorance, then people repent afterwards. Mere creatures often have cause to repent of their deeds, but here in this matter the Savior has betrothed the church unto himself for ever in his own righteousness; and we read in the same prophet, Hosea, "Repentance shall be hid from my eyes." And not only in righteousness and judgment, but also "in lovingkindness;" and not only in lovingkindness, but also "in mercies;" there is the plural; so that that lovingkindness appears in bestowing all that variety of mercies that the church can need through her wilderness state, and those mercies shall all culminate at last upon the head of the church; she shall be crowned with mercies which shall be forever new, and shall

forever sing of the mercies of the Lord. "I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord." Now, all this is nothing else but election. Here, then, is lovingkindness. What a sweet thing, I was going to say, it must be to be in heaven; to be living in the perfection of this love, to be one with that love, assimilated to it, and to be dwelling in this choice, in this eternity, in this righteousness, in this wise judgment, in this loving-kindness, in these mercies, in this faithfulness, and in this knowledge of the Lord. Truly, then, when election is looked at in a proper light, how it endears the Lord. I am fully aware the enemy tries to call our minds off from that which is essential to our welfare, and to get us to meddle with things which we must after all leave. They say, Well, what is to become of all the others? That is not our business; secret things belong to the Lord, and those that are revealed belong to us. Let no one draw you aside to argue upon that matter; it is of no use to argue; you take your stand here, and say to yourself this, or to others, too, under proper circumstances, I know one thing, I am that lost and helpless sinner, if I am saved it must be by grace; if the Lord had not been pleased to love me, I could not have made him love me; and if he had not been pleased to choose me, I could not have made him choose me; and therefore, "not unto me, not unto me, but unto his name be all the glory."

You take your stand there, and leave other matters with God; and when people would perplex you with curious questions upon this matter, answer or take the Savior's words, "What is that to you? Follow you me." I am aware it is one of the devices of the enemy to draw us aside, and bring us to quarrel about these things, instead of our going on to enjoy them. As good Romaine used to say, these things are not given to quarrel about, but to enjoy; to walk by, and to live by, and to die by, and to be saved by, and to know the Lord by, and to glorify him by, and that forever. The church, therefore, is a loved woman, and a chosen woman, never to be rejected. And then, third, this same church becomes also, a consecrated woman: she becomes consecrated to the true Husband. And we have it described in this way, that "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it with the washing of water by the word." Now this has evidently reference to personal sanctification, "washing of water by the word." You will perceive there, and it is worth your while, for the sake of instruction, to notice, that the word there is compared to water, "the washing of water by the word." Now the Savior says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." It accords entirely with the Savior's own words when he said, "Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth." I always tremble when I hear men say it does not matter much about doctrine. Now you see that the Pharisees and Sadducees had so perverted the Scriptures, held such false doctrines, that they did by their doctrines give such a representation of God, and of the coming Messiah, that when the Messiah came he did not at all answer to their representation of him; and therefore, because he did not answer to their representation of him, they said, This is not the Messiah. Away with such a fellow as this! And so, they crucified him; and that is the end of false doctrine. But when Philip was preaching to the eunuch, he did not take man's representation of the Messiah, but he took the 53rd of Isaiah, where the eunuch had been reading; and Philip easily proved to the eunuch, who was taught of God, and inquiring after Christ, that this Jesus, who had thus lived and died, entirely answered to God's representation of him; and the eunuch was so convinced of this, and made so happy in the revelation of this substitutional sufferer, as described in the 53rd of Isaiah, and who so lived, and died, and rose, and ascended to heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended, just as it was written of him, that the eunuch, when made acquainted with these things, did as all the rest of us do when we realize what he did, went on his way rejoicing. And thus the church becomes a consecrated church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, and present it unto

himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” What a sweet representation is that: present it to himself!

I dare not trust myself here to give way to digression, or else one feels tempted to do it. The apostle represents the Savior as presenting the church to himself, as though it was to impress upon our minds the contrast. When the church was presented to him by the Father, at Calvary’s cross, she was then presented with all her debts, and all her sins, and all the curses due to those sins. She was then presented as a slave; she was then at his feet as a slave. I have often noticed that scripture in Ruth upon this. I may be wrong in my idea, but, at any rate, the idea I am about to express has done my mind good many times. It is said, Boaz saw a woman lying at his feet, and our version says, “ he turned himself;” but the margin says, “ he took hold of himself” and I have thought there is a beautiful hint there, that the church was prostrated by sin, and death, and Satan, and the curse of the law, and nothing could be her redemption but Christ; there was nothing that Christ could take hold of and present to God as a price but himself; and so he took hold of himself, and he said, Father, here am I myself; take my blood, take my life, take me. Christ took hold of himself, and presented himself, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and obtained redemption, not by the blood of others, but with his own blood he has obtained eternal redemption, and entered into the holy of holies. So that the church thus, by the blood of Christ, by the Spirit of Christ, and by the truth of God, becomes consecrated to Jesus Christ. She is a loved woman, then, a chosen woman, a consecrated woman, consecrated to Christ Jesus the Lord; and as he finds no fault with her, having constituted her spotless, so she finds no fault with him; but the reverse, that he is the chief of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Yes, the church recognizes him in distinction from all other objects. “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” And I have proved in times past, must not stop to prove it now, that the church in Solomon’s Song speaks as highly of her Husband in his absence as she does in his presence. When the little ones were inquiring what sort of a husband he was, why, she goes on and describes him as the very essence of perfection itself. She never said a word against her Husband behind his back, and, of course, she will not to his face; she loves him too much for that; and she is too sincere and upright to say anything against him behind his back. The church, then, is a loved woman, a chosen woman, a consecrated woman, consecrated to Christ Jesus. And then, as this church is divinely loved, and divinely chosen, and divinely consecrated, so she is very jealously guarded. I have often admired the apostle’s feeling upon that matter. I ever wish to be of the same spirit that the apostle Paul was when he expresses himself in this way, in 2 Corinthians 11. You will find there that the apostle looked at the people as being one with Christ, and he watched over them. He could not endure the thought of their receiving another Jesus Christ, a Jesus Christ of men’s fabricating; he could not endure the thought of their getting into a spirit of hostility to the faith and liberty of the gospel, and thus receiving another gospel; and therefore he says, “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,” lest they should receive another Jesus Christ, another Spirit, another gospel. Notice those words, they are very instructive. Some people think, if they get the name of Jesus Christ, they have got Jesus Christ himself; but there is a mighty difference between the two. Some people think, if they have a pious spirit, they have the Spirit of God himself; but it is quite another thing. And some say, What! do you mean to say the Holy Spirit is not a pious Spirit? Not in their free-will, fleshly sense of the word. The Spirit of God

is a free Spirit, a sovereign Spirit, an infallible Spirit, taking up the isles as a very little thing; and is one with the Father, and with the Divine Word, Christ Jesus the Lord. "Another gospel," says the apostle; so that there is such a thing as another gospel. This woman, then, is a jealously guarded woman.

Bring the matter down to personal experience. Your soul, instead of being a hated soul, is a loved one; instead of being rejected, is chosen; and instead of remaining in hostility, and sin, and malice, and enmity against God, you are reconciled, and consecrated to him; and instead of the Lord letting you run just where you please, and do as you please, he guards you jealously, watches over you, and takes as much care of you as he does of the apple of his eye, preserves you as he does the apple of his eye. The reason we do not love, adore, and cleave to our God more is because we know so little of him; but the time will come when we shall know as we are known, and then in perfection we shall also love, praise, and serve the Lord our God. Let us hear who the Savior is jealous of, then. Is he jealous of his bride? No; but there is a certain person that Jesus Christ was ever jealous of, and is jealous of now, and he will be jealous of him. And who is that person? Why, it is the devil. It is the devil that pours out a flood of false gospels like a river to carry the woman away, to win her affections over to something more pleasing to the flesh. Ah, come over to us duty-faith people; see how respectable we are. Come over to general profession, and then you will go with the tide, and all things will go well. Don't be a solitary creature in the wilderness like that; you will never get on if you stop in that miserable wilderness; you may think you have a place prepared for you there, and that you will be nourished there so long; but I would advise you to come into the paradise of free-will, and duty-faith, and general profession. This is what the devil says. But Jesus Christ says to his bride, "Set me as a seal upon your heart;" that will do for me to look at; let my name be upon your heart; bear my name in your heart; take my name as alone entitled thus to your affection, and feel within that you love me, and can sometimes answer, as Peter did, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." The Lord looks on the heart. "Set me as a seal upon your heart." And then do not be ashamed to own me outwardly. "Set me as a seal upon your heart; as a seal upon your arm," that others may see it. I may look on the heart and see that you love me; and others may look at the arm, and see you are for me. Do not be ashamed of me; I have not been ashamed of you. and don't you be ashamed of me. "Set me as a seal upon your arm;" and let your outward walk and conduct show your decision for your heavenly husband, your consecration to him, and that you are willing to sacrifice anything and everything for his name, but not willing to sacrifice his name for anything. "For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame." And so it shall be no small part of the devil's punishment that he has aimed to seduce the church; that he has been aiming to put false Christs into the place of the true Christ; that he has been aiming to take the church away from her true husband. It is of the devil that Christ is jealous; not in the weak way that creatures are, and can't help themselves, and fly into a rage, like a storm in a tea-pot, don't mean that, no; but he watches over the church with infinite love and care, and watches the devil too; and when he sees the devil likely to get her affection, the Savior steps in, and says, "Set me as a seal upon your heart" and when he gives the command the work is done; "and as a seal upon your arm;" and when he gives the word the work is done. So that all the wrath there, these vehement coals of fire, shall come upon the adversary, even the devil. Christ engaged to bruise his head. Well, but how is this, that Jesus so watches over his bride, and will not allow the elect to be fatally or finally deceived? How is it he so watches over his bride he will not allow her to do as the people of old did in Jotham's parable? and what was that? Why, they chose the bramble to reign over

them. How is it he so watches over his church as to keep up his own name in the church, and not only to win her affection in the first place, but to keep that affection? People tell us, in affairs of love, it is more difficult to keep the affection than it is to get it; perhaps it is, especially if there is not much to keep. But here the Lord wins the affection, and keeps it, and increases it; for the longer we live with him the more cause we see we have to love him, to bless him, and to praise him. So that why does he thus take care to keep the affection of the church? Why, because he has loved it. “Many waters cannot quench love,” oh, how gladly every Christian sets his seal upon that truth, “neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” If you could substitute ten thousand churches into the place of the church of Christ, they would utterly be contemned. If you could substitute millions and millions of the best people that ever lived, from some other globe, some other world, in the place of his people, it would utterly be contemned. They are the objects of his love; nothing can be a substitute for them; they must remain the objects of his love to all eternity. He loves the individual persons of his people, their souls, their very flesh and blood, I was going to say, for we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone; the children being partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise partook of the same. It is their persons that he loves. Hence says the apostle, in the same spirit of the gospel, “It is not yours that we seek, but you” your individual souls that we seek, that they may be saved, and that God might be glorified. Religion! what is there like it, after all? To be thus loved of God, chosen of God, consecrated to God, and jealously guarded, not jealous of us; not with an everlasting finding fault with us, not everlastingly teasing us; no, that is the jealousy of creatures that are fools. God watches over the church with jealousy for her welfare, lest Satan, by his wiles, should carry her away, and “God shall tread down Satan under your feet shortly.”

Then, fifth, this woman, thus loved, and chosen, and consecrated, and jealously guarded, shall ultimately be a glorified woman. She shall appear on heaven’s pavement, walking in the light of that moon of the gospel that will never withdraw its brightness, arrayed in the light of that sun that shall never go down, and wearing that crown of diadems of glory which the Redeemer achieved for her; for he puts the crown upon her head, and she will acknowledge that it is the Lord that crowns her with lovingkindness. “There is a crown laid up for me; and not for me only, but for all them that love his appearing.” So much, then, for the mystic woman, the church of the living God.

I notice, in the next place, a subject not quite so pleasant, namely, *the serpent*. Still I think a word or two may be said upon him that may be profitable to us. Now, how did this once lofty angel become a fallen angel? How did he become thus what is called a serpent? How did he become thus a deadly, irreconcilable enemy to the great God? People tell us we know not how it was; this is what people tell us. Well, we can know only what the Bible tells us; and though there are not in the Scriptures the circumstances surrounding the enemy’s original fall, yet the original fall of Satan, I think, is sufficiently indicated in the Scriptures for the Christian to understand it.

(For want of room, the Fall of Angels will be given in our next.)