

ENCOURAGEMENT (A SIGNET Part 2)

A SERMON

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“And I will make you as a signet: for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts.”

Haggai 2:23

I FELT, when we closed the preceding parts of this verse last Lord’s day morning, that I could not do otherwise than have another discourse upon this subject, because we left many things unsaid which I think may be very profitable to us.

We observed last Lord’s day morning that that new name means, at least, I think it does, what he is as a Savior; that that victory which he has achieved was something new; it was something that never took place before, and something that will never be needed again. You observe that the victories of the Old Testament, their effects were temporal, and they needed to be repeated again and again. But not so with what Jesus Christ has done: his defeat of sin is once and final; his defeat of Satan is once and final; his conquest of death is once and final; the redemption which he has wrought is once and final; the perfection which he has established is once and final; he has perfected forever by his one offering them that are sanctified. How great the mercy, then, of being brought into this new-creature-ship. Other things must of course wear out and break down; but here, in this new creature-ship, in which the Savior himself rejoices, he says, “Behold, I make all things new and he says, “He that overcomes shall be my son, and I will be his God, and he shall inherit all things;” that is, all those new things. This is the only blessedness, that is, in reconciliation to God by Christ Jesus the Lord. This, I think, then, is one part of the meaning of our great Zerubbabel being as a signet, that Christ bears these four names; the name of the Lord, the name of the people, the name of the new Jerusalem, and his own new name; and that he puts three of these names upon his people, which unites them to that indicated in the names. Let us just tarry, before I enter upon the subject this morning, upon this. “I will write upon him the name of my God.” Said the Savior, “I ascend to my Father, and to your Father; to my God, and to your God.” And as there is no possibility of any separation between Jesus Christ and his God, so, there is no separation between us and our God; there is no separation from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. He writes upon us the name of the New Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem now is a heathen city and reckoned among the heathen cities of the world; it is done with, and done with forever; there is not, in all the range of the Bible, one promise left unto the old Jerusalem. All the promises of the Bible now are to the citizens of the New Jerusalem, are to those who are from above, and which

city is free; and thus, we become one with this New Jerusalem, and we glory more and more therein. "I will write upon him my new name." And is it not so? There is not anything under the sun, there is not anything in the whole range of the religion of the Christian, that he has such sympathies or stronger sympathies with than he has with the victory wrought by the Savior. There the Savior has a new name, a new standing; a new name there means a new position altogether. As when a man enters upon a new office there is some name to denote his new position, so Jesus Christ has acquired this new position, and brings us into this new position. Now there are two more things I will notice in relation to the signet. I first notice, then, *the two more things implied in the signet*; secondly, *the divine choice*, "I have chosen you;" third, and last, *the certainty*, "says the Lord of hosts."

First, then, the two more things implied in the signet. Now Jesus Christ being a signet (for we must still apply it to him) implies that nothing can be done without him; nothing can be done without his sanction. He is that seal of heaven, that all authority is vested in him; nothing can be done without him. We will just look a little here at the advantage of this. Joseph, as you are aware, was a type in some respects of the Lord Jesus Christ; and was he not a type of Jesus Christ in this, that when he was invested with power in Egypt, and Pharaoh handed his seal ring to Joseph, he said, "I am Pharaoh, and without you shall no man lift his hand nor his foot in all the land of Egypt"? Now let us take this to help us out with the meaning here; that "without you shall no man lift his hand nor his foot in all the land of Egypt." First, then, Joseph's brethren would be very pleased when they came to know him, they would be very pleased with this position, and especially after his showing the kindness to them that he did, and showing to them that while they sold him God sent him, and that God meant it unto good, that he might save much people alive. Now if we look, then, through the Scriptures, we shall find that nothing can be done without the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves the doctrine we have already referred to this morning, it involves this blessed doctrine, that whatever may exist, whatever may occur, the Lord will take care of his own; he will take care of them spiritually, and he will take care of them also circumstantially, as the matter shall require. You see if the whole world is to be drowned, it cannot be done without the Lord Jesus Christ; and there are some in the world that belong to him, and therefore he will take care that before the flood comes those that belong to him shall be safely housed. If, therefore, we thus know Jesus Christ, and rest upon him, and love him, and see how he has the keys of hell and of death, and that he shuts and no man open, and that he opens, and no man shuts, oh, my hearer, what power we have here with God! I say, what power we have here with God! How willingly he hears the cry of those that believe in Jesus with that faith that causes the soul to love Jesus Christ! with what delight he hears the petitions of those that believe in Jesus Christ after the right order, so as to receive his truth in the love of it, and to abide by it! And if the cities of the plain are to be destroyed, see how he will take care of his own. And if the angel of death has to travel over Egypt, see how he will take care of his own. And if the Red Sea has to roll in and destroy so many lives, yet see how careful he is that there shall not be one Israelite so feeble as not to be able to come out into liberty, and enjoy the salvation of God, and join in that song of triumph for the victory which the blessed God had wrought. And I need not remind you of after circumstances, his care of individuals; I need not remind you of his care over David, and over his captives in Babylon, and over his people again and again. It is therefore our comfort to remember that nothing can be done without the Lord Jesus Christ. This nation, if it be needful, and I pray it may so, of course, that it should continue to enjoy its prosperity as a place where it may prove that the Lord has yet many people; but if its destruction were at hand, even that could take place only to the good of the people of God, only in subservience

to their welfare. "I gave Egypt for you, Ethiopia for your ransom; and I will give people for you, and men for your life." Thus, then, as Jesus Christ is the sealed one, nothing can be done without him. Satan, what can Satan do? He stands at the right hand of Joshua. Satan says, I will wait; I know I cannot take Joshua away and destroy him unless the Lord Jesus Christ permit me to do so, and Jesus Christ did not permit him to do so; might try, but he could not do so. And Satan despaired; he knew very well that he could not reach nor touch Job unless Job's Redeemer permitted it. And it was this knowledge of what I am now stating that so strengthened Job, and enabled Job to say, "The Lord gave," and I know that he has permitted this. I am taken by surprise, but my Redeemer is not; I am overwhelmed, but my Redeemer is not; I am deprived of the riches that I had, but my Redeemer lives; he is not deprived, therefore; "the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord." Now, if you can recognize this truth, then; if you believe in this blessed Jesus Christ with that faith that works by love, remember that nothing can be done without his permission, nothing can be done unless he himself suffers it to be done, for he shall govern the nations upon the earth. And Satan very ingenuously confesses concerning Job, "You have made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has." Now just take that hedge away, or let me break through it, then I will prove that Job is not sincere. And Satan was suffered to break in upon Job. The truth is, we are apt to think that gain is godliness, and if we get on pretty well in the world we are apt to think it is on the ground of something wonderfully good in us, and we think then the Lord is wonderfully good; we think then the Lord ought to be praised wonderfully. Those are our natural feelings. But when he is pleased to take from us these things that are so pleasing to the creature, then down we go; and then, when we are down in the low dungeon, in the low valley, and the Lord comes down unto us, and says, Am I not better to you than all that you have lost temporally? Am I not better to you than all the world beside? Am I not better to you than mortal life and all that it can afford? When the Lord is pleased thus to fill you with his glory, and to shed abroad his love, why, you would then recognize the substantiality of the one, and the comparative paltriness of the other. I do pray for myself, and for you, and for the Lord's people at large, that we may be blessed with more and more spirituality of mind. You may depend upon it, if you do put much dependence in anything below, in this comfort, this advantage and the other after the flesh or in the world, you will find disappointment after disappointment, grief after grief, stumble after stumble, and your infidelities will come into exercise, and you will be ready to curse the day of your birth, and question whether there is a God or not at all. Such is the result when we get into that spirit. But when we can feel reconciled, and seek more of that fountain that will never run dry, seek more of that fellowship that can be a sociality to us when nothing else can, and seek for that that brightens up our prospects for time and for eternity, then it is that we can rejoice that the Father loveth the Son, and has given all things into his hands. How encouraging this is to trust in the Lord! Oh! if sin, if Satan, if circumstances, if mistaken brothers and sisters in the Lord, or if enemies, if any of these could do anything without Jesus Christ, independent of him, where would the counsel of God be? where would his sheep be? where would his truth be? But he goes as it is written of him. And you know how much the Scriptures enlarge upon the blessedness of putting our trust in the Lord. That is one view I take, then, this morning, of the signet, that he had all power; sealed, and having all power, nothing can be done without him, involving the idea that the Lord will take care of us, and that he will make everything work in our favor to our good, and consequently to his eternal glory.

The next thing here is this, that while Jesus Christ being the signet implies nothing could be done without him, the next thing implied is what his being the signet authorizes him to do. Well, it gives

him power over all flesh, to suppress, permit, suffer, govern, control, overrule, deliver, do as he pleases. There is another side to this, and that is, what does it authorize him to do? Now Joseph was authorized, as you are aware, to take his brethren near to himself; he was authorized to put them into the best of the land; he was authorized to supply them freely from the stores of Egypt, and Joseph did all this freely. Now let us hear what the Savior says upon this matter of being sealed, having this authority. He said to those who were very pleased with him, because they did eat and were filled, he said, "You sought me not because of the miracle;" it was not my miraculous power that you were struck with; it was not me that you were pleased with; it was not my power or goodness; it was simply the loaves and the fishes; you are not come after me, as though he should say, You are not come after me, you are come after some more loaves, you are come after some more fishes. You are not come after me; you would have gone after anyone else as willingly as you have come after me, if they had given you some loaves and some fishes; that is what you were after. Now, then, he said, "Labor not for the meat that perishes;" that is, if you mean to be my disciples, you must be taken up with me; you must know something of the valuableness of my person; you must know that my sacrificial flesh is meat indeed; you must know that my blood is drink indeed; and you must know that in the receiving me as your sustenance, indicated by my flesh, thus eating my flesh; and you must understand that if you are a true disciple you must receive me as your joy, for my blood is drink indeed, set forth by the pure blood of the grape, the flesh denoting sustenance, and the wine denoting joy; you must receive me as your sustenance and as your joy. This they could not understand. Bless the Lord, I trust we can understand this, that Jesus Christ is our sustenance. I feel in my soul, oh, were it not for the perfection of the person of Christ there could have been no perfect work, if his person had not been perfect, because, if there had been one fault in him, his righteousness could not have been perfect, and his sacrifice could not have been perfect. So take away this perfection of his person, consequently the perfection of his work, what hope could you have? what threatening is there that you could escape? what curse is there that you could escape? what judgment is there that you could get away from? Not one. Ah! let his perfection be with you in reading the Bible; let it be with you in prayer; let it be with you in meditation; let it be with you in praise; let it be with you in your family ; let it be with you in your avocations; let it be with you everywhere; then, when you come to die, you will say, Here is the perfection, here is the sustenance, here is the joy, complete in him. And hence the Savior unites, and of course inseparably, this being sustained by him spiritually and rejoicing in him, he unites this with the resurrection at the last day. "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "Labor not," then, if you be my disciples, "for the meat that perishes, but for that meat that endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him has God the Father sealed." Here, then, as Joseph was authorized to take his brethren to himself, so Jesus Christ takes his people, his brethren, to himself. As Joseph was authorized to put his brethren into the best part of the land, Jesus Christ is authorized to put his people into the best part of the land, the promises of the gospel, the free grace promises. Of all the lands of the Bible, the many lands, mystically speaking, of the Bible, of all the lands in the Bible, the new covenant is the best land; into that new covenant Jesus Christ is authorized to put his people. And then, again, heaven is the best land; there is no land like the land of heaven. That is,

"The land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;"

and Jesus is authorized to have his brethren in the midst of the land, near to him. So Joseph had authority to put his brethren into the best land, and to sustain them, which he did, and was kind unto them; so the Lord Jesus Christ is said in that very 6th of John to which I have referred, "Him that comes to me I will in no way cast out." The Savior says, Labor not for the meat that perishes, but labor for this spiritual meat. And there is a laboring for it, that is, a praying for it, a seeking for it, a waiting for it; so that he gives us our meat in due season. This, then, appears to me to be the remaining part of the meaning of this signet. First, that nothing can be done without him; second, that he is sealed of God the Father to give eternal life to as many as you have given him. I will close this part of my subject with one request which this great Zerubbabel makes, which the Lord Jesus Christ makes, and which request I trust most of you have, through grace, already complied with, that you have already obeyed, that the matter has been settled with some of you many years; I know it has with me. Shame on me that ever I felt the least shadow of a doubt in my mind as to interest in these eternal things! There is a certain request which he makes, and that request, by the power of the Holy Spirit, every Christian shall comply with; and it is this: "Set me as a seal upon your heart." Emmanuel, God with us; Jesus, saving the people from their sins, Mediator of the new covenant; "Set me as a seal upon your heart." Why, there is not a real Christian upon the face of the earth that has not moments when he can say upon this matter,

"You have my heart; it shall be yours;
Yours it shall ever be."

And the bitter oaths that Peter a few hours before had sworn, and the cowardice he had shown in thus denying his Lord before man, the fear of man prevailed over him, but it could not erase from his heart the seal that had been previously there. Simon, son of Jonas, am I still a seal upon your heart? Do you still retain me in your heart? Am I still your Emmanuel? Am I still your Savior? Am I still your Jesus? Am I still in your estimation the Son of God, the Christ of God? Am I still the same? Ah, I think if Peter had had time to reason he would have said, Yes, Lord, that is all straight, but I am afraid I am not yours. My own cowardice and the dreadful oaths I have uttered, to my own amazement; I could not have thought my wicked heart could be so sunken, could have sent forth such dregs of hell. Surely, surely, I must be more brutish than any man. After all I have professed and heard, after I have been in the mount of transfiguration, after I have witnessed your miracles, after I have been melted down many times and enraptured with the adoration of your wonderful person, yet in that mysterious way led to see that I have a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. But do you still love me? Yes, Lord, if that be anything; for Peter would not think much of it then, but in one sense he would say, Suppose I do, what is my poor weak affection to you, in comparison of your love to sinners? What do you care for my affection? You can live without my love, though I cannot live without yours. And yet, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. Well, then, if you do that, you will be the right sort to feed my lambs, because you will sympathize with them. Love you me? Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Then you will be just the man to feed my sheep, because you will heal that which is diseased, be glad to do so, because you yourself know what it is; bind up that which is broken, save that which was lost, bring again that which was driven away. Do you love me? Yes, Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you. Here was the seal. "Set me as a seal upon your heart." I would not give a rush for a man's religion that does not know something of this in his heart. You that have doubts and fears about your state, and you cannot help it, bless the Lord that you have any concern about your soul at all, why, notwithstanding your doubts and fears, you can say sometimes,

Yes, I can say that I could not hate Emmanuel's name; I can say that I could not despise the Mediator of the new covenant; I can say that in my estimation he is indeed the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Well, then, you must own it. "Set me as a seal upon your heart, and as a seal upon your arm;" do not be ashamed to own me. Now you have set, you as a congregation, as a people and congregation, you have set him as a seal upon your arm; and when the Lord in his mercy shall enable you to complete the New Surrey Tabernacle, let that stand as a seal upon your arm, a testimony of that power that God has given you, a testimony of that work that God has enabled you to work. And the very existence of that building will be a better argument in your favor than all the words I can express. We have his name set upon our heart, but the world cannot see it; God help us, then, to set him also as a seal upon our arm, not that we may glory in men, but that we may thereby let our light shine before men, and be the means, as far as the Lord shall enable us, of bringing others to know the same dear Savior. And the Savior gives us to understand how very deeply interested he is in this, for he says, "Love is strong as death;" that has been proved; "jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame." Now Satan in all ages has tried to get the church, the bride, away from Christ; and all the methods of Satan, of whom the Savior thus speaks as jealous; all the methods of Satan to get the church away from Christ, I think may be all explained in two. He sends out of his mouth, we are told, floods of water; let us take those floods in a twofold respect. First, expressive of floods of persecution, in order to drive the church away from that religion that costs her so much, and get her to profess the devil's religion, that will not cost her anything. She can profess that and can be universally respected. This is one way in which Satan has tried to sever the church from Christ, to drive her away. And some professors in our day, it takes but very little to drive them away from where the truth is preached, and very little to drive them away from the truth itself. Such are professors, but not possessors; such do not possess the martyr's spirit, such do not possess a gospel spirit, such do not possess the Spirit of Christ, nor the Spirit of God; for the man that regards his life more than he does the truth of God is not a true disciple. The other way in which Satan has labored to get the church away from Christ is by false doctrines. You may take, therefore, the flood to mean a flood of false doctrines, trying to persuade her that those doctrines are the waters of life. Hence Catholicism, her doctrines, Puseyism, and other isms which I will not now even name; and by these, if possible, this great deceiver would deceive the very elect. But those who have thus, been enabled to set the Savior as a seal upon their heart, and as a seal upon their arm, they cannot be moved; no, they are as mount Zion, that cannot be moved, but abide forever. And the following words will stand good both ways, that many waters could not quench the love of Christ to us, and many waters cannot quench our love to Christ. Ah, the Christian I know sometimes trembles and says, I am afraid I am such a poor, sinful, worthless, empty creature, that it is of no use for me to speak of love to the Lord Jesus Christ; I do love his truth, I do love him, but I am afraid after all it is not all right. But then it must be right, if you love him; it must be, if you love his truth, or love that Jesus Christ that is represented by gospel truth, it must be right. And as to your being such a poor, dull, dead creature, why, all that shall, under the Lord's own management, make you love him more; because all this poverty you feel demonstrates your need of the unquenchable character of his love and of the perfection of his work. Now, then, many waters cannot quench his love to you, nor can they quench your love to him, nor can the floods drown it. The Savior went into deep waters, but he came out of the sepulcher as loving as he was when he went into the sepulcher. He returned to his disciples and was as loving then as he was at the holy supper. He reappeared to his scattered ones, and was as loving then as he was before he had suffered that bitter death and gone into those mighty deeps in which he dried the sea of God's wrath, and made the depths of the sea

a way for the ransomed to pass over. He returned with the same gladdened eyes, the same loving heart, the same ready hand, the same kind word. No change in the gospel; peace he left with them, and peace he brought to them when he reappeared. Many floods could not drown this love, nor can it to the people of God; hence those that are in glory, they came out of many waters, out of much that was very terrible, very trying, but at last they stand before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Thus, then, there is something to my mind, perhaps I have not made it so appear to you, very pleasing in these three thoughts I have advanced this morning, first, that nothing can be done without the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore we may safely trust in the Lord, for it is an assurance that the Lord will take care of us. Second, that he is authorized to minister to every poor sinner that looks to him all that such a one can need; he is sealed to that end, ordained for that very purpose. And third, that his people are distinguished from others by setting his name, as the Mediator of the new covenant, as a seal upon their hearts and as a seal upon their arms.

Then, secondly, *the divine choice*. “I will make you as a signet, for I have chosen you.” Here we come to another great clause, which time does not allow me to enlarge upon. What shall I say to this, friends? I hardly know what to say. I am again brought to the love of God. What must be the love of God to choose such a Savior as this for us, to choose such a Mediator as this for us, to choose one for us that should take all our sins away and bring in everlasting righteousness; to choose one for us that was co-equal with God the Father? And what was the love of this divine person to suffer himself to be chosen? I know no such things can take place as schisms in the Trinity, but we are obliged to speak after human infirmity. We will suppose this divine Person, this divine Word, had said, Well, I cannot be chosen for such a mission as that, to become their surety, to take their sins, and to take their sorrows, and to live a life in which I shall be exposed to such a universal scorn. I shall be spit upon, my hair shall be plucked off, crucified in the most ignominious way. What must be the love of God to choose such a Savior for us? What must be the love of Christ to join in that choice, and to tarry in it? therefore the first thing here again, you see, is the love of God. The queen of Sheba hits upon a good truth when she says, “Because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he you king.” And where the Lord does not love a man, there he will leave something to be over that man that shall bring that man to destruction; but where the Lord loves a man, he will bring that man under the government of Jesus Christ. “No man comes unto me, except it be given him of my Father.” Then, again, it means not only love, but it means also the Lord choosing to dwell with men upon the earth, as he chose Zerubbabel to build the house, which he did, and finished it, that the Lord might dwell in that house; the iniquity of that land he removed in one day, and by the Lord’s presence every man favored to sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and none to make them afraid, and that there should be abundance; they should not be afraid of having too many, for they shall call every man his neighbor. As soon as ever they saw that a sinner was made friendly, then they should encourage him to come into the same blessedness. So here, the Lord choosing our great Zerubbabel is that he might dwell with us. I will not, having so recently been over the ground, enlarge upon it; but in that beautiful chapter that we all so delight in, I mean the seventh of the Revelation, we see there God dwelling with man. The Lord has chosen Christ that he might dwell there, and that we might dwell with him, and that Christ is the pattern to which we are to be conformed, and we are to be like him, and the Lord is to dwell with us. See the wonderful, the truly wonderful consequences of the Lord dwelling with us, and we being brought to dwell with him. First, they are arrayed in white robes, with palms in their hands. We have a distant idea of what is meant by that state of purity, of victory, and of freedom, the happy consequence of God having chosen the Savior, and by him chosen the people.

And then look at the position of the people; they are before the throne of God. And then look at the theme of the people, with one voice, and that a loud voice, ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb. And then look at the origin of the people, that they came out of great tribulation, washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And then look at the happy state, the ultimate destiny, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away" what a wonderful scripture that is! "all tears from their eyes." Now you cannot find that anywhere else. The Lord does by his kind providences wipe away many tears, and put an end to many sorrows, and he does by the refreshing he is pleased to grant us from time to time from his presence, and show us grace for a little space, and give us a little reviving in our bondage, and dry up our sorrows for a time. Ah, but then again, we find the truth of Bunyan's words, that,

"The Christian is seldom long at ease,
When one trouble leaves him another does him seize."

But here, in the ultimate destiny, the consequence of the choice of God, all tears shall be wiped away from all faces, the gladness of each Christian. Not one Christian will have a sorrow to tell another; not one Christian will feel one sorrow. And we know that people are always the happiest together when they have something to make them happy. A put-on happiness is a poor sort of thing; but when the people have something to make them happy, then they are happy together. So, to all eternity how are the people of God to be otherwise than happy, seeing this is their happy state, in consequence of such a Savior being chosen? What shall we say to this, friends? Who devised this? The blessed God. What, then, must be the praise due to him? Who brought this about? The Lord Jesus Christ. Who has revealed it? The Eternal Spirit. "Three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." "I have chosen you," says the Lord. If, therefore, we have been led to choose the same Savior, then we have chosen that good part that shall not be taken from us.