

## A KIND ANSWER

A SERMON –Preached on Sunday Morning November 17th 1867, by

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"I am come."—Song of Solomon v. 1.

IN these words, we have contained all real, vital godliness. For if we have not Jesus Christ, if he hath not come unto us, then we have not life, we have not light, we have not satisfaction. And it is our need of this he makes us feel and then puts into our souls the prayer contained in the last verse of the preceding chapter— a desire that the Lord would, by his Spirit, as the north and as the south wind, blow upon his garden, "that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Our text is an answer to the same. And the Savior doth upon this subject lay down descriptively certain operations or workings of the Holy Spirit, as evidences of belonging to the Lord; and any person who does not possess those three things which the Savior describes, has no right to conclude that the Lord is with him; he has no right to conclude that the Lord has come to him as a Savior; he has no right to conclude that if he die in that state he shall be a saved man, if he have not these three things. The exception to this rule is that he may possess only one of the three, but then he will seek the others, and will never feel that he is justified in concluding that he is a Christian till he has all three. I mean the three things described in the 16th of John. "When he" —the Holy Spirit, referred to, in the passage I have quoted. As the north and the south wind— "is come, he will reprove;" or, as it should be rendered, "he will convince the world." —that is, the Gentile world, — that is, all the individuals in the Gentile world ordained to eternal life— "of sin," because they believe not in Christ; for no man can savingly believe in Christ unless he is first convinced of his need of him. It would be absurd, a mere fancy, to believe in a remedy the need of which is never felt, never understood, and never known. He shall convince them of sin. To receive persons into churches, and to hold persons as Christians, that are strangers to soul-trouble, strangers to a conviction of their need of Christ, is nothing else but awful delusion; and the persons that do so are themselves deceived, and by the deception wherewith they themselves are deceived they, in all sincerity, deceive others. They themselves are sincere, but they are sincere in a delusion, not knowing that it is a delusion. The next thing is (and the Savior is and must be infallible in his testimony), "He shall convince them of righteousness;" and the Savior explains what that is, - "Of righteousness because I go to my Father;" That is Christ came into the world to do that which the Father gave him to do —namely, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and hereby lay a foundation of right that he should rise from the dead, ascend to God's right hand, and have power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. First, then, we must know our need of Christ's perfect work and secondly, receive it in what it is. Then the third step is the completeness of the Savior's victory: — "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged," — that is, Satan; that he is overcome, that he is conquered, that his counsels are all confounded, as indicated in the promise that

the Savior shall bruise the serpent's head. Hence Satan is always making mistakes, for everything that he does is subservient to the furtherance of the gospel, to the good of the souls of saints, and to the glory of the great God. See Satan instigating men to crucify the Savior- that great event. There Satan was made subservient to the gracious and wonderful purposes of the most high God in the salvation of men. Now if you ask, Am I taught of the Holy Spirit? ask whether you know your need of Christ; ask whether you understand his righteousness as the way of acceptance with God; ask whether you understand his victory —that his victory is complete; and he that overcomes must overcome by receiving the victory that the Lord Jesus Christ himself hath wrought.

Our text is an answer to prayer. The church prayed that he would come, and his gracious answer is, "I am come." It seems nicely to accord with that promise in Isaiah, — "Even before they call I will answer, and while the» are yet speaking I will hear." Yes, when the soul is burdened, and cannot cry out to God, there is a secret sighing; by and by it can say a few words, and speaking seems to relieve it; and as he answers before we call, and hears us when we do call, this is to encourage us to pray unto him. Our text is greater in its import than two or hours would enable me to bring out. I shall therefore, for the sake of running through the main points, put it into as concise a form as possible. The first thing will be, the person who here declares his own presence, — "I am come." Secondly, the testimony which he bears of his delight in being with the people, - "I am come." The Old Testament saints longed to see him come, and the time did arrive when he could say, "I am come." All heaven longed to see him enthroned, and now he can say, "I am come." And so every Christian at the last, when he gets home to glory, —Ah, he will say, no more doubting, no more trembling, no more fearing; -- "I am come."

First then, the person who here declares his own presence. And I will take a threefold view of this person, —first, in his peaceful character; second in his pastoral; and third, in his divisional. First, then, his character in the peaceful sense. "Let my beloved come into his garden." Our text says in answer, "I am come." He is, therefore, the "beloved." There must be something that endeared him to the people, and the first part of my business this morning is to trace out some of those characters the Savior sustains, as re resented in this beautiful book, by which he is endeared to our souls. First, then, his peaceful character. "The song of songs, which is Solomon's." The word "Solomon," you all know, signifies peace, or peaceable, and points out the Lord Jesus Christ as our peace. But then this Solomon, who is the peaceful one, is also a king. See how this accords with what belongs ultimately to the Savior; see how this accords with what is and of Melchisedec; —his name was "king of righteousness and king of peace," to denote that it was that kind of peace that should reign over every war, over every hostile power, over every trouble, over sin and death itself. He is the king of peace - that is, it is a peace that reigns. Now all human peace is easily broken — national, domestic, and personal; and in ten thousand ways. But how sweet the thought that there is a peace that "passeth all understanding." Let us, then, look at the first feature of this peace which this wonderful person brings. And the chief point I shall dwell upon here in order to show how he is our peace, and how he brings peace to us, in that of reconciliation to God by the full, free and final forgiveness of our sins. Our sins are numerous as the sands of the sea shore. What is to be done with them? How clear the word of the Lord is upon this — that they were laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ! Yes, if you partake of spirit of those three things that I named Just now, which hundreds of you do, then you are a part of the people whose sins were laid upon Jesus Christ, and he has put them away buy the sacrifice of himself, has atoned for the, and swallowed up death in victory. Hence the free and pleasing declaration, "Come, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Believe thou that the blood of Christ is able to cleanse the foulest soul? Believe thou that Jesus Christ is God and man in one person? Believe thou the truth of the apostle's words when he indicates the infinite and eternal efficacy of the blood of Christ, when he says, "Feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood"? Would it be unreasonable to conclude that your sins are more able to destroy you than Christ was to destroy

them? —that your sins are more able to hold you fast than Christ is to deliver you? You must not admit that. Oh, never be afraid of giving too much honor to the Savior in the efficacy of his bloody as the great remedy that shall ultimately extract from our souls and bodies every particle of Satanic poison, and present us without fault at that tremendous day. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as wool. if ye be willing and obedient” —willing to receive this testimony and abide by it, — “ye shall eat the good of the land. “Sweet peace thus flows into the soul. Hence it is the Lord says—and it is one of our privileges to know how he has done it, and another of our privileges to receive the testimony, — “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and, as a cloud, thy sins.” Now, mind, it is one thing to receive the testimony of forgiveness, believe it and understand it, and another thing to realize the forgiveness itself; but if you receive the testimony, you will realize the forgiveness in the Lord's own time; because to receive the testimony is to receive Christ. So that if some of you can say, Yes, I see the testimony, I understand it, I believe it, I love it, I receive it; my hope is there; but I am not sure that I have yet realized the mercy, —you will, if the Lord has thus given you a hold of his word, you will go on, and your soul will be secretly saying, Lord, remember thy word, — “Come, let us reason together,” Lord, hast thou not thus promised? Hold fast his word; and if his word hath a place in you, in that word will by and by come the fulfilment of all that it contains. You recollect that all the Old Testament saints went to heaven on the testimony of God. There was not one that went to heaven on the ground of a righteousness being wrought; there was not one that went to heaven on the ground of their redemption being actually paid, or of the atonement being actually made; but they saw the promises afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them and these got to heaven upon the testimony of God of what he would do. And after they were gone to heaven did not God do as he said? Did not Bethlehem witness the presence of the little Stranger, the wondrous Babe; and did not the world witness the presence of this wondrous Savior? Did not the cross witness the mighty achievement of God incarnate? Oh, our God can be trusted! Well, then, again and again, all through the Old Testament, this delightful doctrine of free forgiveness, full forgiveness, eternal forgiveness, is set before us. And it is that in which the Savior much delighted; it is that in which the people of God in all ages have very much delighted. “Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Yes, that is a part of the forgiveness I like very much. You see it is a forgiveness that is for ever. There is no repeating of old grievances; there is no bringing forward past quarrels; there is no bringing forward past disagreeable things; the sins are all put away, all forgotten. And there is even no blame. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” He will not attach even any blame to you. So you see the Father dealt with the prodigal son; —the father did not attach any blame to him that would have been recalling old grievances; that would have been to have recollected that which he had blotted out and put away. “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins.” Now all this and more is by the Lord Jesus Christ, the peaceful One. “Let my beloved come into his garden.” I only say this—that if this putting away of sin, and this entire forgiveness of it, past, present, and future —for all is forgiven, because the priesthood of Christ is eternal, and that is the measurement by which we are to test the nature, and magnitude, and perpetuity of the forgiveness of sin; - if this does not endear God the Father in the gift of his dear Son; if this does not endear Christ, who has thus put away our sins; if this does not endear the Holy Spirit, whose testimony so luminously shines through the Holy Scriptures upon this subject; if this does not endear the gospel; if this does not endear the kingdom of God, the ways of God, and everything that accompanies salvation, as well as salvation itself; and if this does not endear heaven, even before we get there, then I know not what can. As to Pharisaism —that cursed, that infernal, that thrice quadrupled damnable principle of Pharisaism, —it is the greatest enemy to men's souls under the canopy of heaven. I sat yesterday beside the bed of a dying man, and I almost shuddered. He said, “Sir, I have never made any profession, but I am quite as good as those that do, and I believe a great deal better than any of them.” Say what I could, I could not give him eyes to see. There he is, fixed firm in his own supposed goodness —no bands in his death; his carnal confidence is firm. Pharisaism makes a man tenfold

more a child of hell than any other sin. There goes the Pharisee, —Ah, I fast twice in the week, I do not want forgiveness; I do not want a mediator, I do not want your regeneration, I do not want your election, I do not want your immutability; my fasting and my alms are quite sufficient. There is the man damned by his own religion. In comes the poor publican. He had been too bad a man— he had destroyed his Pharisaism by his sins, instead of building it up by his supposed goodness. He listened to the other. What a pious man that Pharisee is! I do not dare go so near, I do not dare look so high, I cannot lift my eyes to heaven; I am afraid; and I cannot stroke myself down and pat myself on the back. I must smite my breast with anguish and self-loathing. I wish I had not come; I will go away; no. I will not. I will stop. And presently, almost involuntarily — "God be merciful to me a sinner!" While he breathes that out, eternal mercy rolls in, and he goes down to his house in that peace that passes all understanding. Forgiveness, pardon, oblivion, sanctification, justification, salvation, glorification, the eternal God in covenant, rise to his view, and he is changed from a beggar to a king; he is changed from a sinner to a saint, from condemnation to justification, from the dungeon of hell to the palaces of heaven. Here is the man that shall join in the new and never-ending song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Why, nine-tenths of your preachers and people of the present day are nothing else but Pharisees in disguise. There is a secret enmity to the liberality and freeness of the gospel. I tell you this, —if you stand out, as you ought to stand out, manfully, decisively, for that which alone can save your souls, you must be content to be reproached; for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." If you can by some ingenuity, if you can by some pious effort, if you can by some stratagem. contrive to live godly out of Christ Jesus, everybody will applaud you; the devil will fill his servants with the best of thoughts of you; the devil will make his servants, his pious servants, think so highly of you. But if you live out of self, in the eternal perfection of mediation, in the eternal counsels of the eternal God, in the eternal life that Christ gives, in God's everlasting love, away from the creature altogether —your own works renounced, the good and the bad, to make God your all in all, —the devil sees he has lost you, and he will give his agents and servants and parsons the worst of thoughts of you. And hence, "they that would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." The devil does not care how godly you live if it is not in Christ Jesus. The devil knows nothing can hurt him but Christ Jesus; the devil knows that nothing can do us any good but Christ Jesus. How many hypocrites are there now-a-days will sit down and sing, —

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good;"

and yet at the same time utterly ignorant of their state as sinners, utterly ignorant of their need of the true Christ of God! But the man who is convinced of his state knows that nothing else can save him but the eternal perfection of Christ.

Now, said the church, "Let my beloved come;" - let such a Savior come as will put away my sins, seal me for heaven, and swear by his own integrity and honor that not only shall I never perish, but not a hair of my head shall perish. Ah, then. —

"I'm safe in my Redeemers hands,  
Even when he hides his face."

Are you, then, poor enough to need such a Savior as this? He comes in this character as our peace. "Glory to God in the highest" —surpassing all other glory, — "on earth peace," by what he has done; and then, to show that this peace is something to he enjoyed, "good will toward men." You know there is no doing can be called a good doing if it is not done with a good will. When a thing is done with a good will, that gives character to the action. Now God the Father gave Christ in good will, and Christ did the will of the

Father in good will, and the Holy Spirit has come to us with a good will, and the will of our God still remains good: "That ye may know what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," "I am come," in revelation. Some of us can say that we have seen him. Well, then, Christian, understand the privilege if you can. On the one hand, you are daily a sinner, if you know your own heart. As I told the poor man yesterday, "Why, sir, you are one of the blackest sinners out of hell." he said, "I have never done wrong in my life yet." "My dear sir," I said, "you have never done right yet." "Why," he said, "if I am bad, if the Lord send me to hell, who will he take to heaven?" That is where it is —just where are all are by nature. You may depend upon it that some of us shall have to bless God more than ever for some of those dark trials and experiences that brought to light our feebleness, our rebellion, humbled us before him, and made us feel our need of Ezekiel's river, getting deeper and deeper until it became waters to swim in. So the gospel of God —we shall increasingly learn its breadth, its depth, its length, its power, and its freeness, and shall increasingly say the prayer, "Let my beloved come into his garden." There is the peaceful One.

The next is the pastoral. Hear what the church says. Where is there a Christian that has not blessed the Lord that he is allowed to make such a distinction between what he is in himself and what he is in the Lord? "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." Oh, what a privilege it is to understand the difference between what we are in ourselves — black as sin can make us, black as Satan can make us, black as the Ethiopian, who cannot change his skin; but in Christ fair, comely, everything pleasing. These people love the Lord Jesus Christ; how could they do otherwise? "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth," —mark that, those people knew that they were black in and of themselves they knew that the sun of sin had looked upon them and blackened them. "My mother's children" —Eve's children — "were angry with me." Because they thought I had a little leaning towards the hypers; and "so they made me the keeper of the vineyards." One gave me a great handful of tracts, and said if I distributed them, and was a little bit zealous, I should get to heaven; and another said if I helped to build a chapel I should get to heaven; and another that if I helped the parson manufactory I should get to heaven. I was busy about other people's vineyards, but did not keep my own. "My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest." I have been wandering over the crags and mountains of Sinai till I am as lean as lean as leanness itself. My eyes are dim, my ears deaf, my tongue cleaves to the roof of my month, my hands are feeble, my knees are weak; — "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be" —I have had quite enough of it — "as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Now mark what follows: "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women" — there's a sweet answer. "Fairest!" That cannot be, Lord, what I am in myself; that must be what thou hast made me. Thy precious blood has washed me; thy righteousness has arrayed me; thy truth has reconciled me to thyself. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents." Now no true shepherd ever pitches his tent outside of the new covenant. Most of the shepherds pitch their tents on old covenant ground. Sometimes they pitch their tents just upon the borders of the new covenant, and give us a little truth; then they apologize for it afterwards, and move their tents off; they do not feel at home there —not at all. Oh! these doctrines those hypers hold, and so we will have as little of than as possible. But the true shepherd always pitches his tent within new covenant ground; he knows that all other ground is dry and barren, and everything contrary to what the sinner needs. The true shepherd, then, pitches his tent on new covenant ground. There is the promise, there is the testimony, all green, all flourishing—green pasture. Old covenant promises are all dried up; the old covenant heavens have waxed old; the old covenant sun has set to rise no more; its moon is turned into blood, lost in death; all its stars are fallen, its ground is barren, under the curse, and under the curse forever. But here, in the new covenant, where the Savior reigns, his promises never wither, his testimonies never wither, his glorious doctrines never wither, his name will never grow old. So, then, let the little ones

be fed beside the shepherd's tent. Whenever you find a minister outside the new covenant, the sooner you are off the better. I only say, any one that goes to hear a Minister of that stamp, you ought to take this comfortable, consoling thought with you—Blessed is he that expects nothing, and then he won't be disappointed. If you do expect anything good you will be disappointed; for they are nothing. But when we come to the high mountains of Israel, the love immutable of an immutable God, the great decrees of heaven determining us to eternal bliss; the great and precious promises that are as independent of us as the skies are independent of us — these — these are the footsteps of the flock, the footsteps of faith in Christ, the footsteps of faith in the truth as it is in Jesus. "Let my beloved come," and Jesus Christ meets his people here. Why, look at that beautiful chapter, the first part of which we read this morning—the 13<sup>th</sup> of John 7—40 all through that wonderful discourse, down to the end of the 17th chapter; it is all gospel from first to last. And I can tell you this, —the more clearly you understand God's truth, and the dearer it is to you, the happier you will live, and certainly the happier you will die. I never knew an instance yet in all my life of a man having, a good experience and a clear understanding of the truth, and yet die unhappy. I have known some good men—ministers a vein of legality running through their ministry; and when they came to die, the Lord has caused their death to be very trying, because there was a great deal to burn off at the last. So it is the best way to get rid of it at once, put it off at once; and if Christ be all in all now, the work will not have to be done then. It is very much better to be humbled now, emptied now, stripped now, and brought to nothing now, that our God may be all in all; and that will prepare us for life, and for a triumphant death.

But, thirdly, he comes as the divisional one, "Until the day break"— and that has a fourfold application: first, the breaking of the gospel dispensation—that is the breaking of the day; second, when he breaks in upon the soul—that is the breaking of the day; third, when the soul leaves the body— "absent from the body, present with the Lord,"—that is the breaking of the day; fourth, at the resurrection —that is the breaking of the day; —"until the day breaks in all these respects,— "and the shadows be away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel;" that is, "the mountains of division." Now it is a remarkable thing that Christ's activities should be spoken of so particularly in oneness with the mountains of division. Why is that? Because there has been in all ages, and there is the same now, a universal tendency to generalize what God has made special, and to amalgamate things that God has put asunder. "The mountains of division." First, there is God's everlasting love, —that is a mountain. "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." And Christ will maintain that; and if you are a Christian, you will maintain that testimony too; you will not give way. Eternal election is a mountain of division, and Christ will maintain that. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;" and the world hateth you, because I have chosen you out of it. If you had condescended by your duty-faith —which ought to be called the devil's faith —to come unto me, then the world would not disapprove of you. But because I have chosen you —I went up into a mountain, and called to me whom I would —therefore the world hateth you. Again, what is his mediatorial work but a mountain of division. has he not by his achievement made an infinite and an everlasting difference between the saved and the lost? What is regeneration but a mountain of division? Regeneration is a wonderfully elevating thing. It brings up the soul in prayer to God; it brings up the soul into the approbation of God; it brings up the soul into reconciliation with God, into fellowship with God, into hope with God—the hope laid up in heaven; it brings the soul up into the enjoyment of God. Here, then, are the mountains of division. And we must abide on these mountains, maintain these divisions, for "if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be any mouth." These, then, are the everlasting mountains: here the blessings come upon us to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. And what shall we say to the division at the last great day; the one saved, the other lost? What shall we say to the contrast between the man that lifted up his eyes in hell, and Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham?

"I am come." Can you receive him as your peace? Behold, I stand at the door. and knock." Are you that poor sinner, that you receive me as your reconciliation to God? Are you that poor, hungry, thirsty sinner that you are longing after the new covenant pastures, and wanting me to guide you in the footsteps of the flock? Can you receive me? I am come as the divisional one. I have established these eternal divisions which God my Father in his counsels has made. Can you receive me? Ah, if you can, he is standing at the door and knocking, and if you can really say, Let such a Savior be my Savior, let such a religion be my religion, let such a hope be my hope, let such a God be my God, then his is come – he is come to you in his testimony, and in life and light; and if he meant to destroy you he would not have shown you these things.

He comes as the paradisiacal one. And just mark three things in his coming. First, he recognizes in coming relationship. "I am come into my garden," meaning, of course. the church and the soul. "My sister, my spouse," now she is Jesus Christ's covenant sister; he belongs to the new covenant. You do not doubt this, do you? His blood is the blood of the new covenant; he is the Son of the new covenant. Take away the new covenant, you would never have had the Babe of Bethlehem; take away the new covenant, no Savior had reached this sin-blasted and sin-damned world. But God set his heart upon a number that no man can number, entered into an everlasting covenant, and in that covenant appointed a Mediator that should carry out all its items—the Mediator of the better covenant, established upon better promises. So then we are not children of Hagar, which we are by nature, all of us; all of us by nature are children of wrath, under sin and under the law; and "what the law saith it saith to them that are under the law," and what the law saith it doth not say to them that are not under the law — certainly not. Some of you Christians sometimes read the Bible and say, Oh, there are a great many threatenings against the sinner. Well, but you are not under the law, are you? You are under grace. It does not mean you; it means the enemy; but you are not an enemy. It means one that does not love Jesus Christ; but you do love Jesus Christ. "I am come into my garden, my sister." The church descends from the same mother; the covenant of grace was Christ's mother. "Go forth, ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart;" set a crown of pure gold upon his head, as having carried out the everlasting covenant. And so he recognizes his covenant relationship; "my sister." Of course the language is figurative, but no less real. "My spouse;" that comes closer still. You know the terms of the marriage, so often stated; but if you want to know the terms you have nothing to do but go to the 2nd of Hosea. and the 7th of the Romans, where the apostle says that we have become dead to the law, and the law to us; for if you hold the law and the gospel too, then you have two husbands at once, and you cannot get to heaven. Before you are married in reality to Christ you must become dead to the and the law dead to you; Christ being the end of the law; married to Christ, and then you will bring forth from time to time love to his blessed name. Second, he comes with the testimony of satisfaction. He says, to denote the pleasing fragrance of the church to him, "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice." The fragrance of the soul! How fragrant was the soul of the woman who washed his feet with her tears and wiped them the hairs of her head! how fragrant were the graces of the Holy Spirit in her soul to Christ! How fragrant are the prayers and praised of the saints, which he offers with much incense. Oh they are fragrant to me. Whatever nuisance they are to the world, they are pleasing to me, they are delightful to me. "I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey." There is the sweetness. All the prayers and praises of the people of God are like honey to Christ; their affections, their confidences, are sweeter than honey to him.