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## EVERLASTING KINDNESS UPON THE ELECT

A SERMON –Preached on Sunday Morning August 25th 1861, by

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD

"In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." (Isaiah 54:8)

A MERE letter religion never did, never can, and never will save the soul. There must be something in our religion beyond mere natural conscience and the letter of God's word in order for the soul to be saved. And while I reject, conscientiously reject, all pretended revelations that are contrary to God's holy word and that will not bear the test of his holy word, for his holy word is that law and that testimony by which all things are to be tried, yet on the other hand, the word itself, or the things contained in the word must be realized in the soul in order for the soul to be saved; and thus while I reject false revelations, or revelations contrary to the word, I contend for revelation that is in accordance with, and that is by, the word of the living God.

I shall notice our text this morning, then, under the threefold form in which it may I think be looked at. Firstly, here is soul discipline, indicated in the words, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment." Secondly, we have kindness and mercy; "with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee," and thirdly and lastly, the order of this kindness and mercy, indicated in the last clause, "saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

I. First then, we have here SOUL DISCIPLINE. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee." I must in order to explain this first part, and that you may judge whether or not a work of grace is begun in your heart, I must bring forth a scripture or two to explain this first part of our text; and the first scripture I will notice is that in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle says, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves." I think if we look a little closely into these words it will at least help us to explain what is here intended, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves;" that is, there is in the conscience a conviction of the solemn truth that the wages of sin is death, that the demerit of sin is death, that the demerit of sin is everlasting punishment, that the demerit of sin is banishment to eternity from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. There is a consciousness of this.

And you carry this with you; for when the Lord fastens this arrow of conviction into the mind you carry this consciousness with you; so to trust in yourself would be like trusting in sin, for you yourself are nothing but sin; nothing but sin forms your character; sin originally, sin internally, and sin externally; for although you might have been to your own credit and comfort an admirable member of society, yet we are not speaking now of your relation to men or to your fellow creatures, we are speaking of your relation to God. We meet with many poor things in a dying hour that say, I have made my peace with God; and when we enquire as to what they mean by that, it simply is this, that I have not injured any one, and those that I have injured I hope the Lord will forgive me that; and those that have injured me I freely forgive them; and thus they make up a certain peace with themselves and their fellow creatures, and think that is peace with God. No, my hearer, that is a delusion that is not peace with God. Your relation to your fellow creatures is one thing, your law relation to God as a sinner is another thing. It is not your relation to your fellow creatures we have this morning to dwell upon, but your relation to the Judge of all, the great Judge at whose tribunal you must presently, in a few days' time, with unerring and infallible certainty appear.

Now if thou hast this conviction, then, of the demerit of sin, and that thou art that sinner that must come, if grace prevent not, into that judgment, it will make thee unhappy; here is the wrath of God apparently lying upon you; you will feel that God is angry with you, the scriptures are angry with you; you will see that the threatenings belong to you, but you will not see that any of the promises belong to you. I think this is one thing intended by the sentence of death. But mind, this is not the only part; there is another very important part which I must not pass over, and that is this, that when a sinner is under the conviction of which I have spoken, he is pretty sure, at least, it was my case, I have found, amidst the hundreds whose experience I have had the pleasure, and I may say, advantage of hearing in the course of my time, I have met with hundreds who were like myself in this respect--namely, that when under a conviction of this their state, they set to, and try to make themselves holy, and they think that a daily good behavior, and that doing the best they can in every sense of the word, they certainly help to make them holy and righteous, and help them to the favor of God, and the salvation of God, and the grace of God; and so they become, by degrees, somewhat, or would do, rather important in their own eyes. By-and-bye, the word of the Lord comes into the conscience, and puts a negative upon their good, as well as upon their bad, upon their righteousness, as well as their unrighteousness; puts a negative upon the flesh altogether. All flesh is grass, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; (Isa. 40:6,7) yea, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things, (Gal. 3:10) and he that offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole; (James 2:10) and by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified;" (Gal. 2:16) and "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness." (Rom. 10:2,3)--Ah, says such an one, why, that's me; I never saw that before; that is just what I have been doing; ignorant of God's righteousness--whatever does God's righteousness mean? that will come before us presently, "Going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Why, such a one says, what does that mean? If I am not to be a Christian by doing good, how am I to be a Christian? If I am not to be a Christian by being righteous, how am I to be a Christian? If I am not to be a Christian by doing everything that is perfectly right, how am I to be a Christian? You are so accustomed to think so very much of your own doings, that you cannot imagine how you can be a Christian, if your Christianity is not to consist of your own doings. But you will find it will not consist of your own doings, you will find that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing. Well, say you, now I am in despair; my conviction of sin did leave me some hope that I should be able to better myself; but now that my holiness and righteousness, and strength are all gone, I do not see what I can do, I do not see what is to be done. Ah, by-and-bye, in the Lord's own time, he will come in and say to thy soul, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness"--and ever remember, though this is anticipating the last part of my subject, but I might as well throw in the remark here, ever remember that this kindness is in Christ Jesus; "That is ages

to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus;" (Eph. 2:7)--"With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer;" it is in thy eternal redemption. Ah then, if this be it, I will gladly be nothing that the great God may be all and in all. Now, my hearer, how is it with you? Do you know what it is thus to have the sentence of death within you, so that you die to the law, you die to all hope by anything you can do; that you are altogether a thing of nought, that you are not partly, but altogether, as an unclean thing; and that apart from the atonement and the righteousness of Christ, there is nothing but wrath for you? Ah, if thou knowest what this sentence of death against thee as a sinner is, not in the mere letter of the word, but in your conscience, so as to make you unhappy, and to make you wander about as in a wilderness, in a solitary way; and that, when you read such scriptures as the following, you can understand them as the pictures of your own soul's experience, that "I am like a pelican of the wilderness," a poor outcast, worthless thing; "I am like an owl of the desert," (Ps. 102:6) more like a bird of the night than of the day; the pelican belongs to the wilderness, so do I, and I fear I shall belong to the wilderness of Sinai, and of eternal devastation and destruction; and the owl is a bird of the night, and so this poor sinner feels, that as a sinner, he is a child of darkness; "I am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top." (Ps. 102:7) And in the same Psalm, the Psalmist says, which is a term, perhaps, we cannot clearly understand, "I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping;" that is an Oriental form of speech to denote that he had nothing to live upon but sorrows, cares, troubles, and anxieties, and in the morning, saying, would to God it were evening, and in the evening, saying, would to God it were morning. Now, my hearer, I am not laying this down to say that you must come under a certain amount of this soul discipline; but there must be soul discipline; depend upon it, if you have not more or less; if you have not enough of this wrath of God in your conscience, which I have described, there is something lacking in your religion; if you have not this sentence of God against sin in your own conscience, the root of the matter is not in you. The Lord help you to look to it, and cry to him to undeceive you, if a thought should cross your mind that you are in any way deceived.

Therefore, there is then, in real religion, a revelation beyond the mere letter of the word; that is, God puts spirit and life into the word to bring the sinner down. But then, my text says this wrath is little. Yes, because it is only in appearance--the real penal wrath fell upon Christ, and you will acknowledge this part of my text, that it is little in comparison of what you must suffer if lost, and it is little in comparison of what an incarnate God endured for you. So that when the Lord shall bring you out of this wrath, out of this death, out of this prison-house, into the liberty indicated in the after part of this verse, you shall then turn round and say--yea, Lord, it was a little wrath, and I thank thee for that little; I bless thee, that while I did at most but taste the cup, there is One that drank it up.--"The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11) He has drank the cup of bitterness, the cup of condemnation, that he may take out of our hands the cup of trembling, and put into our hands the cup of salvation, and enable us joyfully now to call upon the name of the Lord our God.

Then, again, this wrath is said to be but for a moment. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment." So it is only a little time, when the Lord sees the soul is shut up and driven to self-despair, then he will repent himself, that is he will change his dealings. David in that Psalm we read this morning is very expressive upon this, where he says, "His anger is but for a moment." (Ps. 30:5) It is only in a way of discipline; he does not mean to curse you, no; he loves you as much now that wrath is upon you as he did before it came, or as he will when it is taken away; when you are brought into the enjoyment of the Lord's presence he will not love you more than he does now. Why, this very conviction of your state is a proof that he loves you; for of the others he says, "They are joined to idols, let them alone;" conscience, let them alone; Holy Spirit, let them alone; my ministers, let them alone; letter of the word, let them alone; my Son, let them alone; they are thoughtless, and blind, and impenitent, and never feel a concern, an abiding concern, for their precious and never dying souls. Now "his anger is but for a moment, in his

favour is life;" the life is not for a moment, that is eternal. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;" and Christ is that morning, he is the bright and Morning Star.

II. I now notice the next part of our subject, the KINDNESS and MERCY; "But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Let us now look into this kindness and mercy. It is presented to us in this chapter in a variety of most delightful forms. If I am speaking to any that know anything of the soul trouble of which I have been speaking, may the sweet consolations of this chapter somewhat reach your souls, and enable you to cast the anchor of hope upon this free grace ground, and that will keep you safely until you are brought to land, and can rejoice in sweet assurance that God is yours forever. Now it is a remarkable thing that all the forms of kindness and mercy recorded in this chapter are final, unconditional, absolute; there is no if, no but, no may be, no condition, it is all positive, all illustrative of the eternity of this kindness and mercy.

Now, the first form in which this kindness and mercy appears, is in the entire abolition of everything we have to be ashamed of. Hence, the Lord saith, "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of the youth;" that is your natural descent; "and shall not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore;" (Isa. 54:4) the widowhood there means, in the first place, that we apostatized originally in Adam from God, and the law, on the ground of that apostasy, divorced us from God; and that there stands that eternal law of divorce between the soul and God; this is to our reproach. Thus, then, by sin our natural descent, it had nothing but shame there; by sin, or apostasy in the first Adam, where the law divorced us from God, is our shame. Yet those who are brought into this soul trouble, brought under a sight and sense of the shame to which they are exposed, the Lord says to such, "Thou shalt not be ashamed; thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore." And you will see, and this I must be careful to point out, a substitution of two more relations into the place of those relations in which we have nothing but shame. I have observed, just now, in our natural descent, being conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, here is the shame of our youth; but, then, here in oneness with Christ Jesus, we have another birth; "Born of an incorruptible seed, that liveth and abideth forever." (1 Pet. 1:23) This takes away all the sin and shame of our natural descent, or first birth.

And then in our first relation we apostatize from God and were divorced from God by the law of God; but here Christ Jesus now becomes the Husband of the church, and at the same time the Surety, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and by his righteousness and atonement he has constituted his people as free from sin and as righteous as he is righteous; and hereby the shame is gone--there is nothing to be ashamed of. Our natural birth, our natural descent, is considered as having passed away; our apostasy from God in the first Adam is atoned for by Jesus Christ, and all that is passed away; and we who were afar off are now by Jesus Christ brought nigh unto God. Here then is everlasting kindness in the dear Saviour interposing to take away sin: and he still stands in that position. It is only to know him in this relationship, and there is everything there to make us bold, and to make us happy, and to endear the blessed God. But time would fail me to set before you all the forms in this chapter in which this kindness and mercy are set forth; I will therefore go on to the last, wherein the Lord explains what he means by everlasting kindness. And there is a great deal in the very term itself--kindness; it implies that you will meet with plenty of unkindness from the adversary, and you will therefore need the lovingkindness, that lovingkindness of which the Lord speaks when he says: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in lovingkindness have I drawn thee;" (Jer. 31:3) so you see it is the kindness of everlasting love--his love always the same. I say you will meet with plenty of unkindness from the adversary, from the world--and as we live in a day when the world does not persecute the church much, when there is no combined power much to persecute the church, one consequence of that is that the people of God are

everlastingly in almost all the churches throughout the land, agitating, slandering and injuring one another; so that while the world is not doing its own work, unhappily the people of God do the devil's work in many respects for him. Ah, my brethren, these things ought not to be so; these things are of Satan. But if we are brought under proper soul discipline, and brought into fellowship with the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, wherein he hath delivered us from so great a death, and interested us in this life that is eternal, in this kindness, love, and mercy, all of which are eternal, I am sure that everything we say and do contrary to this is a degradation to us, and not an honor to us. But nevertheless even these things teach us to cease from man and to lean upon the Lord alone; they teach us the necessity of the Lord's kindness, and mercy, and goodness to us. But I will go on again to show wherein this kindness consisteth. The Lord goes on to explain this, in order that we might be sure of the eternity of the kindness, of the infallibility of the mercy. "I will surely have mercy," the Lord says; as though he should say, I know Ephraim doubts it, I know this poor sinner questions it. Ah, I am afraid the Lord will shut up his tender mercy. No, the Lord says, "I will surely have mercy." If you have a heart to receive it he has a hand to give it. If you have a heart to receive the testimony of his mercy, and are looking for the reality of that mercy, you would never have had the heart to receive it if he had not had the hand to give it. Now the next form in which it appears is that of a sworn covenant. Here is the soul brought into oneness with Jesus Christ, sin, and wrath, and everything put away, mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embracing each other, then comes the sworn covenant. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn.

So the Lord appeared to Abraham by an immutable oath. Abraham is a representation of the people of God, and they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham; that is, they that are of the same faith, not those that disbelieve what Abraham received. Now as the Lord could swear by no greater, he swore by himself unto Abraham, so that Abraham was acquainted with God in that immutable oath beautifully set forth in the 110th Psalm,—"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Here is the order of the oath; it is a sworn covenant in the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. "So have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." Well, but can't my sins make him wroth? No; for that would imply a deficiency in Christ's work; but can't my enemies make him wroth with me? No. "Nor rebuke thee," that is, not penally. "For the mountains shall depart," and if the mountains mean the firmly settled kingdoms of this world, they will depart, "and the hills be removed," and if the hills mean the firmly settled provinces of this world, still they will depart; "but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Ah then, give me Christ as the Husband of the church, putting away all my sin and shame, and let the everlasting God appear here in this sworn covenant, I take my standing there, sometimes with great trembling, and think, Ah, have I any right here? Ah, what holy ground, what solid ground, what heavenly ground, what peaceful ground, what fruitful ground, what paradisiacal ground; ah, what a sweet region is this, what a pure clime, what green pastures, what still waters, what healing medicine; ah, what a noble tree of life I get here, the very leaves healing my wounds, the fruit sweet to my taste; and here I have the presence of the Lord; but have I any right here? and at times I feel that I have no right here, and fear the Lord will come and order me off; yet I have nowhere else to go to; for if you get me away from this, where Christ stands between my soul and God, and my sins are gone, get me away from this, where there is a sworn covenant that his kindness shall not depart from me, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed; ah no, his own dear Son must be first removed, for that oath is in Christ, as you see in the 110th Psalm. Here I stand; I have no other ground, here I wish to live, and here I wish to die; and were it not for my own heart, and the devil and various annoyances and afflictions one has, why, I should be almost as happy here as I should be in heaven, standing upon this ground. But then the Lord has ordered it otherwise; he is pleased to teach us by many adverse circumstances and by many trials, all to make us more deeply feel our need of this sworn covenant, and of this eternal mercy. Another

form in which it appears, is the destiny of the people. He has a city for them. Now these people who are brought to receive these truths, they experience much tossing about, and although they know the truth they cannot get at the comfort of it. Ah what sorrows, what bitterness and anguish of the spirit have I experienced since the Lord first brought me to the enjoyment of the gospel. He knows what our path will be, and so directly the sworn covenant is brought in what are the next words?--"O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted"--not comforted? What, brought into relationship to Christ Jesus, Christ between you and God, your sins gone, and you not comforted? What, here is a sworn covenant, and you not comforted; and you stand thereon, and not yet comforted? Yes, though I am in a divine persuasion at all times of these truths, yet sometimes without a particle of comfort. Then the Lord steps in and gives another representation of his kindness and mercy: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones of fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." The meaning of this is explained by the 21st chapter of Revelation; you have there a description of the city of God; that description of course must be understood spiritually; and that is what is meant in this chapter, and then if you go to the 11th of Hebrews, you will see the kind of consolation that the Lord intends by this declaration of a city. "Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." A little further on in that chapter, all that died in faith the apostle sums up their character in a few words; he says like ourselves they were brought out to know the truth; and they had opportunity to return, but they desired a better country, even an heavenly; "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." So then the consolation is there is a city to go to, there is a place to go to, a home to go to. I thought of those words in one of the children's hymns this morning, and I was reckoning up how many years it might be before I should get there;

"Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Jerusalem, my happy home."

It is a happy thing my hearer, when we can look forward to the city of God, and there see the saints of God. The Lord's name shall be in their foreheads; they shall see his face, and shall reign for ever and ever. He hath prepared for them a city; there is a home to go to; bless the Lord, there is the bread of eternal life, and the water of life, and the tree of eternal life, and the crown of eternal life, and eternal life itself, and the God of eternal life--a glorious home to go to. Mercy also implies that you will be sinful enough all the way to need that mercy. Is there one night of your existence that you would wish to sleep without mercy being your guardian angel? Is there one day you would wish to live without mercy following you? Is there any place at which you would wish to be found--at the house of God, at your lawful calling--without mercy being with you? "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee;" and "the Lord delighteth in mercy." (Micah 7:18) What a sweet scripture is that. We often pray and look to him as though he did not delight in mercy, but he does delight in mercy.

And then I need not remind you of the way in which this chapter terminates going on to describe the peace into which the people who are thus taught of God shall be brought, and of the enemies that shall rise against them, and how the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and bringeth forth an instrument, for his work is in the Lord's hand, how the Lord himself has created that smith; and how the Lord has created the waster to destroy; and how the Lord stands engaged to see that no weapon formed against thee shall prosper, and that every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."