

HUMILIATION and RECONCILIATION

A SERMON –Preached on Sunday Morning September 8th 1867, by

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"That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth anymore because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."—Ezekiel xvi. 63.

I sorrow there is not a son or daughter of Adam in the universe that has not something, in some shape or form or another, to say on his own or her own behalf. They will confess that they are sinners, but nevertheless there is a little goodness somewhere, there is a little exception from their fellow-creatures somewhere; they are not quite so bad as A, not nearly so bad as B, and nowhere near like D. I can look around, says each, and see many worse than myself. Now this delusion would not be of so much importance, only in order to be saved we must be convinced of the danger of such an error as that; for that error of supposing there is something good about ourselves is a fatal error, because it will keep such a one from the gospel, and make him hate the light of the gospel. And there are some, too, that do say they have nothing to plead whatever, that they are sinners altogether, and that they scorn the thought of pleading anything in a way of merit; and yet these same persons hold doctrines that imply the same. It is therefore no use to pretend to renounce all confidence in the flesh if we hold a doctrine that implies human merit. For instance, the doctrine that a man may be a child of God to-day, and may be lost tomorrow—that doctrine embodies human merit. Those who hold it deny human merit in words, but their doctrine necessarily includes this; because, according to their account, there is so much grace given, and if the right, and good, and proper use to the end be made of that grace by the possessor of it—not by the Author of it, but by the possessor of it—then he will be saved. Now this shows the delusion. And so how important it is, then, to know what and where we are as sinners in the sight of the living God.

Last Lord's Day morning we dwelt largely upon the covenant spoken of in the preceding verse, where the Lord says that he will establish his everlasting covenant. But as this is a covenant that reaches to everything pertaining to the sinner's need, if the sinner be not divinely convinced of the extent of his need, then he is not prepared to receive that covenant. "I will establish my covenant with thee," an everlasting covenant; "and thou shalt know that I am the Lord;" that is, know the Lord in this covenant ordered in all things and sure; "that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth anymore because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

Now there are three doctrines in our text. The first is that of humiliation. The second is that of reconciliation,—“when I am pacified toward thee.” The third is that of final decision,—“saith the Lord God.”

The first doctrine, then, in our text, is that of humiliation. It is no small mercy for us that we are allowed to distinguish between the voice of God's law and the voice of God's gospel. Hence the apostle Paul says, "We know that what things so ever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Now the humility here that clothes us with confusion of face and with shame in our own estimation, this humility is a real internal grace of the Holy Spirit, and not a mere put-on thing. It is not a mere humility of manner, though that is very good and useful in its place; but it is a vital, real humility, arising from what is felt within. Let us then see if we understand this matter, whether the law of God has spoken to us or not. What the law says it says to them who are under the law. Now all of us are in our fall in Adam under the law, and that law speaks to them who shall be saved, but does not say anything to them that God, in the depths of his sovereignty, passes by and leaves. The law reserves what it has to say to such until the last great day, and then the law, uttered by the lips of the great Judge of all, Christ Jesus—for he it is that is ordained to judge the quick and the dead—the law will then sum up all it has to say to the lost in a few words,—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;” the devil and his messengers, the devil and his servants; that, word "angel" is sometimes applied to man, and is capable of such an extent of application that man is included in the declaration— “prepared for the devil and his angels." But those that the Lord intends to save, the law speaks to them while they are in this world, and says to them what it hath to say. And when the law has spoken to such, and said to them what it hath to say, they are thereby prepared to receive the gospel. For the law, if I may so speak, is the plough share that enters into the very soul, and ploughs up the hidden evils of the heart. This I will carefully and minutely describe presently, after I have just reminded you that what I am saying is true, that what I am saying is according to the testimony of God's word, but lest any of you should doubt it, I will name one instance—a circumstance to which we so often refer; I mean that of Saul of Tarsus. You observe, the law had not spoken to him, only in the letter—that is all. But then men do not hear that, men do not see that, they do not feel that. The law speaking to a man means its speaking effectually to him, so as to stop his mouth, turn him into a prisoner, and make him feel that he is a prisoner to sin, that he is a prisoner to the threatening's of the Bible, that he is a prisoner to God's wrath, that he is virtually a Prisoner to hell. Now the apostle says, “When the law came;” -why it never came before; but when the law came and spoke home to me, thundered in my conscience, thundered in my soul, a dreadful sound was in my ears, and it brought to light the hidden evils of my heart, and my mouth was completely stopped. The Lord shut my mouth that I could never, never open it again in a way of boasting; I could never open my mouth again to say anything contrary to God's truth. Now let us then try to enter a little into this. There is a striking and a very instructive description, only of course it is the voice of the law, given of our state in the 1st of Isaiah. There is our state personally, there is our state of deprivation, there is our state as to our service. “Ah, sinful nation”—that is, full of sin; that is what we all are by nature; “a people laden with iniquity;” you have nothing else, nothing else; that is just what we are by nature; “a seed of evil doers;” there is none that doeth good—spiritually, mind; you must not take that merely in the moral or social sense; because in the mere moral and social sense thousands of men and women are admirable characters. But you must take that in the spiritual sense; because the law being spiritual, and we being carnal, sold under sin, whatever we do in relation to that law is like ourselves, and just unlike the law. The law is spiritual, we are carnal; at the same time we are in a state of enmity against the gospel so that we cannot do any good spiritually in relation to the law, because that is spiritual and we are carnal; and we cannot do any good in relation to the gospel, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and without faith it is impossible to please God, all this is the voice of the law: - “A seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken anymore?” God may smite a man with affliction after affliction, he may bring judgment after judgment or he may throw in providential

mercy after providential mercy, and the words of Kent, as well as the words there given, will still be true, that—

"Judgments nor mercies ne'er can sway
Their roving feet wisdom's way."

"Why should ye be stricken anymore; ye will revolt more and more" So it is, unless there is grace in the heart, nothing else can do it. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Now that must all be taken spiritually. That is just what we are in the sight of God. "There is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores." That is an expression very strong, and it may seem to some of you not very sublime; but we are not in a sublime state as sinners, therefore we must have language corresponding with our degradation to describe that degradation, and God has put such language upon record in mercy. Everything pertaining to the sinner is infinitely and eternally loathsome to the great God; and are nothing else, nor can you be anything else by anything you do, but a child of wrath. Do thou thus see and feel thyself - that this putrefaction has got hold of thee, and that thy destiny therefore must be dreadful, dying in that state? Then he goes on to say, in the next place, "Your country is desolate." Is it not so? What is mortal life? To those of you that have lived longest what is it? Why, it is like a shadow. This now is gone, that hope is gone; this friend is gone, that friend is gone; that ten years has gone, another ten years gone, and presently all gone. So that what a desolate state it is! And are we to be content, then, with this ruined world? Are we to be content with this sin-blasted state of things? Are we to be content with this miserable position for a soul that has vast capacities, and vast desires, and vast powers, and must live forever? The man that is taught of God feels the force of all this. He feels there is something within him that cannot find rest within the regions of anything that is seen. And then the Lord rejected their services and despised all their offerings. Your offerings of bullocks and of lambs, your new moons and your appointed feasts—I despise the whole of them, I loathe the "whole of them, hate the whole of them. Ah, my hearer, do you think me censorious when I say there is nothing under heaven more hateful to the great God than a humanly created religion. Such was the religion of Saul of Tarsus, and that religion led Saul of Tarsus to insult the Most High, to degrade the Savior and persecute his saints in a way that no poor, profane Gentile ever did. It was this humanly manufactured religion that crucified the Savior; it was this humanly manufactured religion that crucified and put to death so many of the saints. Popery is a clear manifestation of this. So that the Lord rejects the person, and the country, and the service, and it is all bad together, from first to last. And now I will go, if I can, a little farther. The apostle says, "What the law says, it says to them who are under the law;" that is, it says to them now, convinces them now "that every mouth may be stopped." Now the law, as the Savior shows, reaches to the inmost thoughts of the heart. Even unjust anger in the heart against any fellow-creature—for every fellow-creature is a brother considered in the creation sense of the word—is murder. Who then is free from that? But there is another aspect of this which is worse, and that is that every man by nature is virtually a murderer of Jesus Christ. And I believe that to be the meaning of the Psalmist when he says, "Deliver me, O God, from blood guiltiness"; that is, from deadly enmity against Jesus Christ, or against that truth that is the representative of Jesus Christ, or against that people that are one with Jesus Christ. "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." I wish the man had been fast asleep or else his hand paralyzed that wrote the superscription over that Psalm, tying that 51st Psalm down to a circumstance to which it has no reference whatever. Why, I have in times past proved that the Psalm cannot—its own contents show that it does not—refer to the circumstance to which the superscription has tied it down. Like the Book of Revelation:—you take your Bible and you say, I wonder at what time this Book of the Revelation was written? You look at the top, and there you get the year 96. Well, now, by what authority is that put there? It ought not to be there. I have never seen any human

meddling or interference to alter God's word, or to fix it in a sort of iron frame, but it always spoils it. Let the whole of it alone, and let God's word speak for itself. But let us come closer still, if possible. Now the law of God is spiritual, always spiritual. Are you? The Christian cannot, he dare not, say that he is always spiritual; but thanks God he is not under the law, but under grace, were the spirituality of one who is perfect is set to his account. But to the natural man we say, the law is always spiritual, you are always carnal; the law is always holy, you are always unholy; the law is always good, you are always evil; the law is always just, you are always unjust; the law is always upright, and you are always as deceitful as the devil. Your heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. When you see the law to be thus spiritual, you will remember your foolish ways, how thou hast sinned against the Lord, how thou hast sinned against thine own soul, how thou hast been deceiving thyself, and putting thyself off, and that you have hitherto been a stranger to what our text describes,— "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded"—as was Saul of Tarsus, as was Zacchaeus, as was the publican that sighed for mercy; and as is every one that is taught of God,— "and never open thy mouth anymore;"—your mouth will be completely stopped. You have not one reason to assign why you should not be damned with the heaviest damnation; you have not one reason to assign why the heaviest curses of God's word should not fall upon your guilty head; you have not one reason to assign why the Lord should show mercy to you, or show you any favor whatever. Now can you say this is the case? Ah, if this be thine experience, if this be thy conviction, then what I have to say in the other two parts of my subject will indeed find a place in thine understanding, in thy best affection, in thy soul, and thou wilt rejoice at the good news to sinners, and only sinners. The words of Mr. Hart, I like them very, very much—that—

"A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so."

Ah, what difficulties we meet with in sick rooms! We go to visit a man, and he is a sinner in his own eyes, but not that kind of convinced sinner that the convinced sinner of the Holy Ghost is. He is bad in his own eyes, but the badness does not go far enough to make way for the gospel. He needs a Savior, and sees he needs a Savior; but, alas! alas! not such a Savior as is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ never was and never will be a halfway Savior to any one; he will be all, or else nothing— one or the other of it. There is decision with him. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; that they may know what they are as sinners. So the prodigal, when he came to himself, then it was for the first time his mouth was shut, and he wanted to get away from self, to get into his father's house.

We will now look, secondly, at the reconciliation. Now "what the law saith it saith to them that are under the law." Some of you little ones, that do not understand this distinction, you read the word, of God in the 1st of Isaiah. Ah, say you, that is me, and that will be my destiny. Well, that is the voice of the law. Ah, but that is me. Well, so it is you; but then it is only you in the first Adam; it is not you in Christ Jesus—no. You are two yours in one. There is the old man standing, and at that you tremble; there is the new man standing, in that you are to rejoice. "When I am pacified toward thee." Well, let us look, then, at this reconciliation next. Haman got up a writing and a decree against the people of God. Mordecai had done a good deed; he became exalted, and Haman was hanged; and it is said that "they hanged Haman; then was the king's wrath pacified." Let us take this to carry us to a greater than Mordecai. Satan's our enemy; sin is our enemy; take both these in one. Now the king's wrath was pacified when the Jews' enemy was dead. So the Lord Jesus Christ—he hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and Jesus Christ hath blotted out of the way, nailing it to the cross. Before this turn of affairs took place everything was against the Jews; but now everything was in their favor. Just so, without sin being put away by Jesus Christ, and Satan conquered by Jesus Christ—without this everything is against us; but when this is done, things then are made to take that wonderful turn that everything is in our favor by faith.

Those of us that know thus our condition, we do most solemnly, most firmly and understandingly, and we can say lovingly, sincerely, and decisively, believe in what Jesus Christ hath done. We see by what he hath done all the sins of which we are the subjects put away, and we are delivered from them all. We are no longer reckoned sinners, but saints; no longer reckoned enemies, but friends—"Abraham my friend;"—and so the Lord's people are the seed of Abraham, and are God's friends by faith in what Jesus Christ has done. And so great is the change he has wrought that now the Lord doth not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor see perverseness in Israel. And the consequence of this change wrought by the Savior may be illustrated very nicely by the five things that are said of Mordecai in the last verse of the last chapter of the Book of Esther. I suppose no Christian can read that verse without being tempted to say, "A greater than Mordecai is here." It is said, "Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus." Can we read that without being reminded that Jesus Christ is at God's right hand? That he has entered heaven in all the excellency of his work on earth? And that he is therefore at God's right hand to plead the cause of sinners; "And great among the Jews." And is not Jesus Christ great with us? Oh, is it not great love that he has shown? Is it not a great salvation that he hath wrought? Is it not a great Victory that he has obtained? Where will you look for such a Victory as he has wrought? His conquest is a final conquest. He has conquered sin once, and conquered it forever; he has magnified the law once, and magnified it forever; he has swallowed up death in victory once, and swallowed it up forever; he hath brought in the promises of God, and brought them in forever; he hath sealed the covenant of which he was the Mediator, and hath sealed it forever. He therefore is at God's right hand, great among his people. "And accepted of the multitude of his brethren." And so is Jesus. How gladly doth my soul drink in the testimony of what he has done! I see, and feel, and know I am the wretch the word of God describes. On the other hand, I know that there is not anything too hard for him; so my soul gladly drinks in what he has done. So, then, "let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren;"—the word Asher signifies "happiness," and Jesus Christ is our happiness; oh what a happy thing to receive him as the end of all our woe, as the end of all our trouble;— "and let him dip his foot in oil;" an Orientalism, to denote that he should walk in prosperity. So the Savior doth. He walked in adversity while he was on earth; but he walks in prosperity now, and his people shall walk in prosperity too. But not only was Mordecai next to Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, but also "seeking the wealth of his people." And the Savior says in the 122nd Psalm, "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." He is still seeking our welfare. So if you ask what Jesus Christ is about, the answer is that he is leading those who are in heaven to fountains of living waters, and feeding them with the delights of eternity; and that he is with his people on earth, seeking their welfare, and ruling everything in their favor, making everything work together for their good. And then see how it is summed up, - "speaking peace to all his seed." Jesus Christ hath peace to speak. The law never did since the fall, and never will, speak peace to any man. But Jesus Christ took the bitter cup, suffered what there was to suffer, and he is our peace. But not only is there reconciliation brought about in this way—there is no more wrath; but the shame—that is, our sins, sin is our shame and our confusion - and everything that we have done, it is all to be forgotten, or to be remembered only as forgiven. You know my old illustration of this—that unatoned for sin is like Samson's living lion, but atoned-for sin is like Samson's dead lion. God will make it subservient even to do you good-subserviently so. The lion itself did Samson no good, but the honey that he got by it did him good. Now it is to be forgotten. Let us hear what the Lord says about it. "Fear not"—that is, if you are a believer in the eternal oneness that there is between Christ and the church; if you are a believer in his eternal perfection, if you are a believer in eternal election (and you are not a Believer at all if you are not—not truly so), then the words belong to thee —"Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed"—nothing to be ashamed of. I have no sin to be ashamed of, not one, as I stand in Christ; I have no deficiency, no sore, no deformity, no fault; without spot—nothing to be ashamed of. Hence the apostle says, "I know that in nothing I shall be ashamed." "Neither be thou confounded;" that is, if you receive this Jesus Christ. Conscience often tells you you shall; Satan tells you you shall; unbelief tells you you shall; and some of

your kind fellow-creatures will tell you you shall be confounded; but God says you shall not. "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 thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore." So that while in the law sense they are never to open their mouths any more, in the gospel sense they are never to shut them anymore. The law shuts the mouth, and the gospel opens the mouth. My mouth has been opened now for forty years, and opened continually, and I should like to be able to open it wider; for the Lord says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Some people think I open it rather too wide now, go rather too far; but the apostle Paul, after writing the, beautiful epistle to the Ephesians, says, "Praying for me, that I may open my mouth." Open your mouth! Why, Paul, you have opened it pretty wide already. See what you have said in your 1st chapter, and in your 2nd, and in your summing up. Well, I hope to go further yet. "Praying for me, that I may open my mouth boldly"—as the Greek word means, freely, plainly— "to make known the mystery of the gospel." The apostle's object was not to preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. His desire was that his mouth might be opened to make known the mystery—not the mere history, but the mystery—of God manifest in the flesh; that the souls of men may be thrown into this holy mystery, and swim along towards the realms of everlasting bliss. Now, I say, while under the law we are not to open our mouths anymore; under the gospel "the very stones would cry out if these should hold their peace." What is to stop us from boasting in the Lord? What is to stop us from glorying in the Lord? What is to stop us from speaking well of him? The Savior likes the church to speak well of him. He says her lips, in her testimony of him, drop as the honeycomb; every word she says in his favor, coming from her heart is sweet to the Savior's taste. If we eat his words he eats ours. "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits;" and the testimonies which his people bear for him are the fruits in which he delights. See how he received, and, I was going to say, feasted upon the testimony the centurion bore. Why, the Savior was delighted with the centurion's unbounded confidence in him. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." So, then, on the one hand, the mouth is thus shut; on the other hand, when brought to know the truth, set free, and free for ever.

"Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore." That is, the soul was gone over to Satan, and as it were married to Satan, and the law of God on that ground divorced us from itself; you see that—divorced us for the capital crime of being married to the devil. Do not think I am speaking triflingly here. It is an awful truth that the soul of every human being is one with Satan, and loves him, though the sinner does not know it, and delights in him, and glories in his lies, while he tries to persuade such that those delusions in which they are glorying are not lies, but truth. The law has divorced us; there we are represented as widows; there is our shame— our apostasy from God. But "thou shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore." Our covenant with death is happily broken, our agreement with hell is happily dissolved, and now we are brought to Jesus—the soul married to him. "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called." Here, then, is the remedy. And then mark something else. It describes the work of the Holy Spirit, and that is the great deficiency of the present day. People think now they can be saved by a natural faith, without any experience, without the indwelling of the Spirit of God, without regeneration. "Come to Christ, and believe in Christ," is the cry of the day. But ah, my hearer, all thy coming to Christ without his coming to thee and quickening thee by his Spirit will prove that thou art a mere professor, not a possessor. Thou hast never known thine own sore and thine own plague, and thy prayers will never be answered. Those who are convinced of their state, and do receive the Savior, their prayers shall be answered, and answered pertaining to their eternal welfare. Solomon in his prayer gives us a beautiful representation of this. He says, "Whatsoever plague." Say you, what plague does he refer to? Any plague, but one in particular. "Whatsoever sickness." Now what is the

plague, and what is the sickness, he especially there refers to? It means of course any plague, any sickness; but there is one particular plague, one particular sickness, or, as It is called in the Book of Chronicles, one particular grief, one particular sore. David says, "My sore ran in the night, and ceased not." Solomon refers to one particular plague. "What prayer and supplication so ever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart"—mark that,—“and spread forth his hands toward this house; then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive." Every one that shall know the infidelity, the deceitfulness, the leprosy, the weakness, the abomination of his own heart, these are they whose prayers will be heard, because they will plead nothing but the sacrifice provided, they will plead nothing but a Savior's blood, a Savior's name, and a Savior's righteousness. Now this is a secret matter; it is one part of the secret of the Lord to know your own heart, for he shows it to those whom he intends to save.

Mark a little farther. I must go on as far as time permit, for I shall not be able to reach the last part of our subject this morning, — the final decision. "For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou was refused, saith the Lord God" Now let us try to understand it. "The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken," —that is, the soul feels itself, in its sinful state, forsaken of God. Such a one says, God hath forsaken me. I have found out that I am without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world. Ah, this grieves me, to be without Christ! Whatever else I possess, I cannot possess it long; death that thief will soon take it from me. Without hope and without God! I am grieved; I am distressed; O unhappy me! "And a wife of youth, when thou was refused." Refused by what? Why, you tried to please the law of God, your old husband, your dead husband; as says the apostle, "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." You tried to please the law; and what did it say to you? "Cursed is he that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and if you offend in one point you shan't be my wife. "He that offends in one point is guilty of the whole." Well, then, I am guilty; I am rejected; what is to be done? Why, Jesus Christ says, come unto me, and I will not cast you out; I will not refuse you. All your sins will commend you to me; all your necessities will commend you to me; and the very reasons that the law rejected you I will turn into reasons why I should receive you; for "he receiveth sinners and eateth with them." So "the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou was refused" by the law of God, but accepted by the gospel of God, received by the Christ of God, and taken to everlasting glory by the God of eternal salvation. Let us sum up this matter as far as I can do this morning. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee" What, again? Yes, again. What, after receiving me? Yes, he will forsake you after that: not vitally, not as to relationship, or love, or approbation, or choice, but as to communion. Oh, how shall I ever get into his presence again? "With great mercies will I gather thee" So, then, when I hide my face from thee the beasts of the forest shall creep forth; you shall have some fresh lessons concerning yourself, and then will come in by my Spirit, by my Father's good counsel, and by the victory I have wrought, and "with great mercies will I gather thee," even the sure mercies of David.

The Lord lead us more and more into these things, for his name's sake.