

TROUBLE ENDED.

A SERMON –Preached on Sunday Morning March, 15th 1868, by

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"For mine anger is turned away from him."—HOSEA xiv. 4.

BY the fall of man the wrath of God came upon all men, and so all by nature are children of wrath. And all the time a man is under that wrath he remains unconcerned about his soul and for eternal things; he remains unconscious of the wrath that he is under, unconscious of the real character of the sin by which he is tied and bound, and made thus an enemy unto God; he remains unconscious of the vital and essential importance of being born of God. This is what I understand where it is written, "He hath mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth;" that is, he leaves them under the curse, under that wrath that came upon us by the fall. The Lord forbid I should say a word against the highest consistency of life, but the most consistent man under the heavens, apart from grace, considered merely as a natural man, can do nothing. from his childhood to his death, but augment that wrath under which he lives. Men do not think so, but it is so. There stands the declaration, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not shall not see life, for the wrath of God abideth on him," according as wrath came upon him by the fall in Adam, and according to his own personal sins. But where the Lord intends mercy, where our text shall be applicable and be true, "mine anger is turned away from him;" there the Lord gives a concern, a solemn anxiety to be delivered from the wrath to come, a heart to cry unto him for the needed mercy. After all, there is not anything we can be under so terrible as the wrath of God. Whatever afflictions, or troubles, or trials, or drawbacks we may be laboring under, if we are not under God's wrath, then every affliction, every trial, shall be a blessing. But if we are under that wrath, then our prosperity and our adversity all minister one end—namely, our eternal destruction. Whereas, on the other hand, if we are Christians, then our adversity and prosperity shall all subserviently minister to the one great end described by the apostle when he said, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

There is in our subject implied a ponderosity and a weight that outweighs everything, and I am afraid I shall fail this morning, as I always do indeed, to set it forth according to its own importance. However, I will proceed to notice the text under a fourfold representation. First, reconciliation to God. Secondly, the work of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, the oath of God. Fourthly, the Paradisiacal state of things that is brought about where this anger is turned away.

First, reconciliation to God. The Lord hath said this shall be the language of those that shall be reconciled to him. "Thou shalt say in that day, I will praise thee, for though thou was angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Here is the turning away of anger in the manifestation thereof. Let us first describe, then, as minutely as we can, this personal reconciliation to God. And of course it is simply by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is pleased to show the victory that Christ hath wrought

over sin, and how, having put the curse away, he hath established a state of things wherein there is certainty. Here is a sinner concerned as to whether he can be saved or not. And perhaps there may be, when he has thus considered, through the blindness that is in us all, something like enmity against God's truth. You recollect Naaman went away in a rage, though he came to in the Lord's own time. In the 27th of Isaiah the Savior is represented as slaying the dragon that is in the sea—that is, in putting away sin, and thereby conquering Satan, swallowing up death in victory, and bringing in that eternal victory which he hath wrought, and thus to establish a state of certainty. "In that day sing ye," that is, ascribe you, "unto her," that is, the new Jerusalem, "a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." You will observe, here is a victory wrought, and a state of certainty established. Here is a state of things that the Lord keeps; here is nothing left to the creature, but everything to the Lord; he takes the people, the gospel, the blessing, and everything pertaining to them, into his own hands. In truth, here is nothing in a way of condition left for the creature to do. A great many have fought, and still do and I suppose will to the end of time, fight against the testimony of the victory that Christ has wrought, and against that state of certainty which he has established. Then if the Lord is pleased when such are fighting against him to meet with them, and to say, "Why persecutest thou me?" and to say, "Fury not in me; who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." When a sinner thus sees, and feels that he is as worthless as the brier and the thorn, his eyes begin to be opened. Ah, he says, I never saw before what a sinful, worthless, wretched, miserable creature I am. I can now see that nothing but that victory which Christ has wrought can deliver my soul, that nothing but the Lord undertaking the whole of it, from first to last, can deliver my soul. But then I have been an enemy, therefore there is no hope for me. Now hear what the Lord says to those who are convinced of their worthlessness and of their condition. "Or let him" that has thus been fighting against me, —ah, if I am speaking to any this morning that have been going on neither fearing God nor regarding man, fighting against religion altogether, or that have fought against his truth—in either case the Lord says, "Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." The Lord's strength there, I think, means three things. First, it means the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is the power of God; and for anyone to lay hold of God's strength is to believe in Christ, to believe in the infinite and eternal efficiency of his atonement, that he hath atoned for sin. Lay hold of that and believe that strong, deep-rooted, tough, and mountainous as thy sins are, his atonement is infinitely more mighty to put them away. Let him thus lay hold of my strength. "Believe thou" is still the language of the Savior, for what he said to one while below he says to all now that he is exalted — "Believe thou that I am able to do this?" "Let him take hold of my strength," take hold of that atonement. There you will see that you need no life, no light, no sanctification, no justification, no mercy, no grace, no promise, you do not need one blessing that is not implied in and does not come by the atonement of Jesus Christ. Some of us have seen our fellow-creatures in their dying hour try to make peace with their Maker in a very delusive way. "They say they have done no particular wrong to any one, and I forgive them that they have wronged me; so, I have made my peace with God." I would not say what I am now going to say if I were not obliged to say it, but we must not fear man. Upon the back of this in comes a man with a little bread and a little wine, and says, You have done no particular wrong to any one, and those that have wronged you, you forgive. What have you now to do? Eat this bit of bread and drink this drop of wine, called the Lord's Supper, and you will be saved; you may die in peace. But it is the peace of delusion, look to it, my hearer, whether you are brought to know that peace which can be had only by faith in the infinite and eternal efficacy of the atonement of Jesus Christ. That that cannot put an end to sin cannot make peace; that that cannot pardon guilt cannot make peace; that that cannot swallow up death in victory cannot make peace; that that cannot conquer Satan and cast him down cannot make peace. All the time the enemy has the upper hand, the soul by the power of the enemy is led captive, and is a stranger to that peace that passes all understanding. Thus, then, by laying hold of God's strength—Christ Jesus in his atonement, in his wondrous work, we make peace with God. You will succeed now that the Lord has

blessed you with faith in his dear Son. "He shall make peace with me." You are sure to succeed, but you can succeed in no other way. And you will find the New Testament refers to this: — "Reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Ah, if you are brought thus far, even before you enjoy the peace, if you are reconciled to the way of peace, if you understand the way of peace, then you understand what nature does not understand; for it is said of us in our state by nature, "The way of peace they have not known." But now you are brought to know the way of peace—Christ Jesus. You have not the peace, perhaps, yet, some of you, —you can see the way, you can see that this way of peace is as just as it is merciful. You can see here that truth and mercy meet together; and you are reconciled to this. Then wait upon the Lord; wait, I say, upon the Lord, The vision is for an appointed time; and that peace to the way of which thou art reconciled will by and by come in like the waves of the sea, will overflow all the banks of thy mountainous sins, and thou shalt not only thus have peace with God, but enjoy the peace that passes all understanding. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

Now many of you are young in years, very young, and the Lord has made you concerned for eternal things, and has made you as sober-minded as though you were seventy years old. I often think of it when I see young men and young women, to whom it would be natural to be somewhat giddy and wild—when I see their youthful minds sobered down. When I see, them reconciled to God, early seeking the Lord, and coming from time to time to his house, and walking in his blessed ways—ah, what hath the Lord done for you, young people; instead of suffering you to spend all your days in Satan's service, in the world's service, and in delusion, he has taken you while you are young, —what has the Lord thus done for you. And you find no pain in that sobriety of mind—no, you find a peace, a happiness, a cheerfulness, a courage, and a delight in it that nature never could not will yield. On the other hand, there are some of you that are young, but you have no concern yet for eternal things. May the Lord make you feel that all the time you are unconcerned. that is an evidence that you are under his wrath. May the Lord make your unconcern a means of making you concerned; may the Lord make your very unconsciousness a means of convincing you where you are. For I feel as though I could not endure the thought of seeing a number of young people hear the word from time to time, and know no more about it savingly alter they have heard it for years than they did before they heard it at all. Those of you, therefore, that are young, as well as those of you that are more advanced in years, if there be any here this morning that do not know the truth, may the Lord make your unconcern a means of making you concerned, and those of you that do not know the Lord may perhaps wonder when you hear the Christian speak like this—

"More the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests bursting o'er my head."

You may say, whatever can that man mean? What a strange expression that is! Ah, but the old Christian, and the young Christian as well, that knows something about these things, his unconcern makes him concerned; his very darkness makes him fear; his hardness of heart, and blindness, and the evils he feels; these things alarm him, and make him seek the Lord more earnestly. So the Lord is never at a loss for means by which to make us concerned for eternal things. And is there anything so well worth being concerned about as the eternal salvation of our souls? Hath the God of heaven and earth shewn so much concern for anything as he has for our eternal salvation? Hath he given his dear Son for any other object? Did Jesus Christ come into the world for any other object? Did the Holy Spirit descend on the Day of Pentecost for any other object? And is there an infinite mansion, or if you please an infinitude of mansions prepared? What is it for? Why, for the saints. Is there a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God? What was it prepared for? Why, that salvation may shine forth in all its perfection and splendor to all eternity. Why does the Lord keep up a preached gospel in the world now but for this one

object—the eternal salvation of souls. Oh, it is a blessed thing then to be concerned about the same things that your Maker is concerned about. When a flood was coming, the Lord was concerned about Noah, and Noah became concerned for the same thing; and when the Lord intended deliverance from Egypt, he stirred up the people, and made them concerned about the same thing that he himself was concerned about, happily that people of whom it is true, "Mine anger is turned away." Ah, if that anger be turned away, we know what takes the place of it.

Secondly, to take hold of God's strength means to take hold of his truth. God's truth is the strongest thing in the world. Never did a man speak with more propriety, with more consistency, with more acceptance to God—truly the meditations of that man's heart and the words of his month were acceptable in the sight of the Lord his Redeemer—then the man that said, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." There is a disease too strong for all human remedies, baffles all human skill; but if thou will speak the word, my servant shall be healed. Just so it is with the gospel. The apostle says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." The believer can indeed say, Lord is there anything too hard for thy truth; when you come in thy power and speak the word, the mountains bow down, the valleys are exalted, crooked things are made straight, and rough places plain. I think that the apostle Paul would have been ashamed of the gospel of Christ if it were not what it is. He was a good witness of it. Was there ever a greater enemy to God than was Saul of Tarsus? What an enemy he was; how far he was off in the state he was in; but the Lord's word brought him down, and the Lord's word brought him up, and the Lord's word enriched him, and the Lord's word sustained and guided him. The apostle says (and we can almost see a heavenly radiance on his face when he says it), "We are bound; but the word of the Lord is not bound." The word of the Lord cares not for the foundations of the prison, cares not for the bands with which the prisoners are bound, cares not for the closed doors nor iron gates; it can remove all obstacles. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? The disciples said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name;" that is, the word that is preached in thy name. Let us have a word before I leave this part upon the 3rd of Galatians. - "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen." Well, say you, I am a civilized man, not a heathen. But you are a heathen by nature; all of us are spiritually so. "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Now, the believer can lay hold of that, and say, Lord, there's the sworn promise I do believe it; I feel my need of it; I know the adaptation of it; I want greater blessing; I need no more lasting blessing, "For as many as are the works of the law are under the curse," and I think the apostle there gives us a pretty good proof of this, for he says, "It is written, cursed; everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Then if you go to the 3rd of the Romans, you will there find the apostle declaring that "there is none that doeth good, no not one; there is none righteous, no, not one." Therefore, if you will have it conditional, then you must be under the curse. And the apostle says, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight God, it is evident; for the just shall live by faith." Thus, then to take hold of God's strength means to take hold of his truth, his gospel truth, his yea and amen truth. A great many learned men are running about now and saying, with an air of triumph, as though we could not answer them, What is truth? I can give an answer that satisfies myself, that satisfies every one that understands it, and so can every child of God. The truth is God's sworn promise to bless, "He could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, In blessing I will bless thee. "After ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." That is the truth. Ah, says one, that is high Calvinism. You may call it what you like, but that truth existed before Calvin was ever thought of. We do not get our religion from Calvin; we do not shape our creed after Calvin; we do not obey John Calvin; we do not subject the Bible to him, but we subject him to the Bible. He was a man saved by grace, the same as every man must be that is saved at all. The Christian can truly say that God's sworn promise by Christ Jesus is his only hope. Then to take hold of God's strength

also means to take hold of his covenant—the covenant that is ordered in all things and sure, “And he shall make peace with me.” Oh how suited all this is! Am I then a sinner, lost and ruined, led to see that Jesus Christ hath atoned for sin, and that no man, let him be who or what he may, comes unto the Father but by Jesus Christ? Then I am seeking peace with God in a way that I shall not be disappointed. If I lay hold of his truth, then that truth is to be my shield and buckler; thus I shall gain the victory, and have peace. And if I lay hold of his everlasting covenant, and stand by that, then we have peace with God, I will not move from that; no man has been able yet to move me from it, and never will. I see plenty of false interpretations of Scripture, which do not accord with that covenant that is ordered in all things and sure; I cast them all away, for I am sure they are wrong if they do not harmonize with that. This then is one thing towards this great end— “Mine anger is turned away from him.”

Then secondly, this anger is turned away by the work of Jesus Christ. Third chapter of Galatians— “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” So, then Jesus Christ represented sin before God. He was made sin representatively, tutionally, he was not defiled by sin, but he was made sin representatively. When Jesus Christ appeared before God, there was not a single sin that had been or would be committed to the end of time by his people that he did not represent. And if he thus represented the whole, then the curse was proportionate. He was made a curse according to the sin which he represented; and you know what is written: - “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all; and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many.” Now, if he represented all the sins of the people, and the curse of the law, then nowhere, when the matter is rightly understood, does the curse of the law appear in such an awful form as in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then the very soul of his sufferings is in a great measure hidden from us; We know a little, and but little. But bless the Lord, the time will come when we shall more clearly perceive the deeps into which he went, and the greatness of his love. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might wait for the promise of the Spirit through faith;” that is, through believing what Christ has done. “The blessing of Abraham;” that is the blessing that God promised to Abraham; -and mark, “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” We are not to receive the promise of the Spirit by works, but by faith, by faith in Christ’s redemption, by faith in his having been made sin, and a sin offering for us. Now is there one Christian in all this assembly that has as much of the Spirit of God as he could wish to have? I know I have not; and I could not endure so much as the Lord could give me. If the Holy Spirit should come in all the splendor of his divine revelations into our souls, not one of us should know whether we were in the body or out of the body. But the Lord has promised the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. And how are we to wait for it? By faith, we art to expect an increase of light, and wisdom, and grace, and power, by faith in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. I hope my latter days will be my best days. I am getting older in body, but I was never younger in soul; I never loved the truth more, I never loved God more, and he is my witness, I never longed more for an increase of the Eternal Spirit in my soul than I am favored now to do. And when I look at the way in which the blessing is to come, I dare not despair; - “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Oh, if any good were required of me before I was thus favored with an increased revelation of eternal things by the Eternal Spirit, I should drop in despair. But as we are to receive the promise through faith in Christ Jesus, I dare not despair; because I see that Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come; he has turned all the anger away. The 85 Psalm is fulfilled by the Savior’s work; - “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger;” all put away by this mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not want another Bible, but an increased revelation of its deep and wonderful mysteries, of which I know so little. Is it any wonder that the apostle Peter should say, “Unto you, therefore, which believe he is precious?” if what is in Christ does not endear him what can? Where can you find any endearment that can for one moment rival the endearment that is in Christ Jesus and in our covenant God by him?

Thirdly, this anger is turned away by the oath of God; by a sworn covenant- "I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee." "I will heal their backsliding." I like the Latin rendering very well there; — "Curabo aversionem eorum;" —I will heal their aversion. I will not turn from them, and they shall not turn from me; I will live with them, and they shall live with me; "I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him." "I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. The mountains may depart;" —Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, were mighty mountains, but they are gone; —the love of our God is not gone. England, in the midst of the globe, has taken deep and wide root, and is a mighty mountain, but it will end by and by. "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed" —all human confidences be swept away; "yet shall not my kindness depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." There are some Christians live with the Lord as some wives are obliged to live with their husbands—quite a miracle if they get through the day without some awkward word or other. That is a very poor life, you know. Now we are not to live with the Lord like that. He does lead us through the wilderness, it is true, when we need it, and reproveth and chastens us; but then the rod is always dipped in love; the rod always turns out to be exceedingly profitable. It is that we might be partakers of his holiness; for "he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Saul of Tarsus when brought under the chastening hand of the Lord said, "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." How long have you found that out? Well, the Lord found it out for me; he has chastened and scourged me, brought to light all these evils, and now I confess them. And so the Lord deals with his people now; he makes them confess their utter nothingness. And now, he says, I will show you that there is no condemnation for you; — "mine anger is turned away from you."

I must now come to the last part—the paradisiacal state of things that is brought about where this anger is turned away. The Lord says certain things in this chapter to Hosea, and they must be true of his people in all generations. "I will be as the dew unto Israel." That of course, as you are aware, means his refreshing gentleness and kindness in his dealings. Now there are three conditions very favorable to the deposition of dew; and if those three conditions do not exist, you get but very little dew, and sometimes none at all. First, there must be calmness in the atmosphere. If there is boisterous wind, you get no dew. And if your soul be in rebellion against God's truth, there is no dew. If your soul be in rebellion against his truth, and you cast it from you, "ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil;" representing the mere professor. But if thou hast the shield of God's eternal truth, if thy mind is in sweet harmony with that truth, then there is that reconciliation to him by which the dew shall come. But all the time thou art in rebellion against his truth, there shall be no dew. "Humble yourself, therefore," says Peter, "under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." The next condition favorable to dew is that of geniality of temperature. If it is too cold, then the dew degenerates into hoar frost. So, you will meet with some cold professors; if they say a word or two, it is like an icicle; they do not care for the poor, they have no sympathy for the souls of men, the honor, and truth, and glory of God. But when there is a nice genial temperature, when your heart is warm towards God, and you can truly say that you love him, then Jesus will come unto you: and when he comes, he is sure to come as the dew, and as the rain; God the Father will come unto you, and he will come in the same way, for "He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust;" and "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" Do you love him? Ah, then, "they that love him shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." With thee the winter in this sense is over and gone, the gentle dew is come. One more condition favorable to dew is a cloudless sky. When there are clouds there is very little dew, and sometimes none at all. But give me a calm atmosphere, genial temperature, and a cloudless sky, then I get a copious fall of dew. Why, say you, what do you mean by a cloudless sky? Ah, says one, I am always under one trouble or another pretty well, that is not what I mean. I will make it clear to you. By a

cloudless sky, I mean a cloudless Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the morning without clouds; he looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners. Not a fancied Christ, where there is something left for the creature to do, where there are some few clouds left; but where the Lord's word extends to every cloud; where he says, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Here it is that eternal sunshine settles on our heads; here we have a cloudless sky; here the dew of Hermon descends upon the mountains of Zion, where the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. Try thyself, then, by these three things. First, reconciliation to God; second, love; you cannot be reconciled without love. It is not like a humanly made-up reconciliation—shake hands and say yes, I will forgive you. It is a cold forgiveness very often. When it is a warm one, then it is all right. And then a cloudless Jesus Christ, for in him is no darkness at all. The people that are brought into this state, "I will be unto them as the dew; and they shall grow as the lily." Lilies are very beautiful things, and very innocent things. Just so the Christian. He is innocent from the great transgression of treading underfoot the Son of God; and he is beautiful in God's eyes as he stands in Christ; and he is harmless—he would not do a single thing against God's truth. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." Did the disciples ever in one instance speak rudely to the Savior? Did they ever do the slightest violence to him? Well, say you, Peter cut the man's ear off. But that was not the Savior. And John said, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" But he did not mean the Savior. Ah, it is a good thing that Peter and John were not God; it is a good thing our God is not like us. The Christian shall grow up in peace. In oneness with Christ, in sweet reconciliation to God; and shall adorn the Savior's garden; for his church is his garden; his people are the lilies, surpassing in their spiritual dress all the glory of Solomon. "And he shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Ah, says one, I see where you are going to now. Those stubborn hypes fasten their roots in the ground, and you cannot pull them up. Neither the devil, nor the world, nor affliction can pull up one of these cedars; no, as the Lord says in the last verse of the 31st of Jeremiah, "They shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more forever." "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up;" but those that he has planted, root them up you cannot. Was Jesus Christ ever rooted up? Never, never. Were any of his people ever rooted up from God's love, from God's choice, from God's salvation, from God's spirit from God's truth? Never, and never shall be. "Mine anger is turned away from him." Here, then, are some of the happy consequences of anger being turned away. Though I have said nothing in comparison of what might be said.