

THE PEACEMAKER.

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*“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” —
Matthew 5:9.*

THIS is the seventh of the beatitudes. There is a mystery always connected with the number seven. It was the number of perfection among the Hebrews, and it seemeth as if the Savior had put the peacemaker there, as if he was nearly approaching to the perfect man in Christ Jesus. He who would have perfect blessedness, so far as it can be enjoyed on earth, must labor to attain to this seventh benediction, and become a peacemaker. There is a significance also in the position of the text, if you regard the context. The verse which precedes it speaks of the blessedness of “the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” It is well that we should understand this. We are to be “first pure, then peaceable.” Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin, or an alliance with that which is evil. We must set our faces like flints against everything which is contrary to God and his holiness. That being in our souls a settled matter, we can go on to peaceableness towards men. Not less does the verse that follows my text seem to have been put there on purpose. However peaceable we may be in this world, yet we shall be misrepresented and misunderstood and no marvel, for even the Prince of peace, by his very peacefulness, brought fire upon the earth. He himself, though he loved mankind, and did no ill, was “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.” Lest, therefore, the peaceable in heart should be surprised when they meet with enemies, it is added in the following verse, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” Thus the peacemakers are not only pronounced to be blessed, but they are compassed about with blessings. Lord, give us grace

to climb to this seventh beatitude! Purify our minds that we may be “first pure, then peaceable,” and fortify our souls, that our peaceableness may not lead us into surprise and despair, when for thy sake we are persecuted among men.

Now let us endeavor to enter into the meaning of our text. Thus would we handle it this morning, as God shall help us. First, let us *describe the peacemaker*; secondly let us *proclaim his blessedness*; thirdly, let us *set him to work*; and then, fourthly, *let the preacher become a peacemaker himself*.

I. First, LET US DESCRIBE THE PEACEMAKER. The peacemaker, while distinguished by his character, has the outward position and condition of other men. He stands in all relations of life just as other men do.

Thus the peacemaker is *a citizen*, and though he be a Christian, he remembers that Christianity does not require him to forego his citizenship, but to use and to improve it for Christ’s glory. The peacemaker, then, as a citizen, loveth peace. If he liveth in this land, he knows that he lives among a people who are very sensitive of their honor, and are speedily and easily provoked — a people who are so pugilistic in their character that the very mention of war stirs their blood, and they feel as if they would go at it at once with all their force. The peacemaker remembereth the war with Russia, and he recollecteth what fools we were that we should have meddled there, to bring to ourselves great losses both in trade and money, and no advantage whatever that is perceptible. He knoweth that this nation hath often been drifted into war for political purposes, and that usually the pressure and burden of it cometh upon the poor working man, upon such as have to earn their living by the sweat of their face. Therefore, though he, like other men feeleth hot blood, and being an Englishman born, feeleth the blood of the old sea kings often in his veins, yet he represseth it and saith to himself, “I must not strive, for the servant of God must be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient.” So he putteth his back against the current, and when he heareth everywhere the noise of war, and seeth many that are hot for it, he doth his best to administer a cooling draught, and he saith, “Be patient, let it alone, if the thing be an evil, yet war is worse than any other evil. There was never a bad peace yet, and never a good war,” saith he, “and whatever loss we may sustain by being too quiet, we shall certainly lose a hundred times as much by being too fierce.” And then in the present ease he thinketh how ill it would be for two Christian nations to go to war

— two nations sprung of the same blood, — two countries which really have a closer relation than any other two countries upon the face of the earth, — rivals in their liberal institutions, — coadjutors in propagating the gospel of Christ, — two nations that have within their midst more of the elect of God and more of the true followers of Christ than any other nations under heaven. Yea, he thinketh within himself, it were ill that the bones of our sons and daughters should go again to make manure for our fields, as they have done. He remembereth that the farmers of Yorkshire brought home the mould from Waterloo with which to manure their own fields — the blood and bones of their own sons and daughters, and he thinketh it not meet that the prairies of America should be enriched with the blood and bones of his children, and on the other hand he thinketh that he would not smite another man but would sooner be smitten of him, and that blood would be to him an awful sight. So he saith, “What I would not do myself, I would not have others do for me and if I would not be a killer, neither would I have others hilled for me.” He walketh in vision over a field of battle, he heareth the shrieks of the dying and the groans of the wounded, he knows that even conquerors themselves have said that all the enthusiasm of victory has not been able to remove the horror of the dreadful scene after the fight, and so he saith, “Nay, peace, peace!” If he have any influence in the commonwealth, if he be a member of the House of Parliament, if he be a writer in a newspaper, or if he speak from the platform, he saith, “Let us look well to it ere we hurry into this strife. We must preserve our country’s honor; we must maintain our right to entertain those who flee from their oppressors, we must maintain that England shall ever be the safe home of every rebel who flies from his king, a place from which the oppressed shall never be dragged by force of arms; yet still,” he saith, “cannot this be, and yet no blood?” And he biddeth the law officers look well to it and see if they cannot find that peradventure there may have been an oversight committed, which may be pardoned and condoned without the shedding of blood, without the plucking of the sword from its scabbard. Well, he saith of war that it is a monster, that at its best it is a fiend, that of all scourges it is the worst; and he looketh upon soldiers as the red twigs of the bloody rod, and he beggeth God not to smite a guilty nation thus, but to put up the sword awhile, that we be not cast into trouble, overwhelmed with sorrow, and exposed to cruelty, which may bring thousands to the grave, and multitudes to poverty. Thus the peacemaker acteth, and he feels that while he does so, his conscience

justifies him, and he is blessed, and men shall one day acknowledge that he was one of the children of God.

But the peacemaker is not only a citizen, but a *man*, and if sometimes he letteth general politics alone, yet as a man he thinks that the politics of his own person must always be those of peace. There, if his honor be stained, he standeth not up for it: he counteth that it were a greater stain to his honor for him to be angry with his fellow than for him to bear an insult. He heareth others say, "If you tread upon a worm it will turn," but he saith, "I am not a worm, but a Christian, and therefore I do not turn except to bless the hand that smites, and to pray for those that despitefully use me." He hath his temper, for the peacemaker can be angry, and woe to the man who cannot be, he is like Jacob halting on his thigh, for anger is one of the holy feet of the soul, when it goeth in the right direction; but while he can be angry, he learneth to "be angry and sin not," and "he suffereth not the sun to go down upon his wrath." When he is at home, the peacemaker seeketh to be quiet with his servants and with his household, he putteth up with many things sooner than he will speak one uncomely word, and if he rebuketh, it is ever with gentleness, saying, "Why do ye this? — why do ye this!" — not with the severity of a judge, but with the tenderness of a father. The peacemaker may learn a lesson perhaps, from a story which I met with last week in reading the life of Mr. John Wesley. Going across in a ship to America with Mr. Oglethorpe, who was to be the governor of Savannah, he one day heard a great noise in the governor's cabin. So Mr. Wesley went there, and the governor said, "I dare say you want to know what this noise is about, sir, I have good occasion for it. You know, sir," said he, "that the only wine I drink is Cyprus wine, and it is necessary for me; I put it on board, and this rascal, my servant, this Grimaldi, has drunken all of it; I will have him beaten on the deck, and the first ship of war that comes by, he shall be taken by press, and enlisted in His Majesty's service, and a hard time he shall have of it, for I will let him know that I never forgive." "Your honor," said Mr. Wesley, "then I hope you never sin." The rebuke was so well put, so pointed, and so needed, that the governor replied in a moment, "Alas, sir, I do sin, and I have sinned in what I have said; for your sake he shall be forgiven; I trust he will not do the like again." So the peacemaker always thinketh that it is best for him, as he is a sinner himself, and responsible to his own Master, not to be too hard a master on his servants, lest when he is provoking them he may be also provoking his God.

The peacemaker *goes abroad* also, and when he is in company he sometimes meets with slurs, and even with insults, but he learns to bear these, for he remembereth that Christ endured much contradiction of sinners against himself. Holy Cotton Mather, a great Puritan divine, of America, had received a number of anonymous letters, in which he was greatly abused; having read them and preserved them, he put a piece of paper round them, and wrote upon the paper when he put them on a shelf, "Libels; — Father forgive them!" So doth the peacemaker do. He saith of all these things, "They be libels, — Father, forgive them!" and he doth not rush to defend himself, knowing that he whom he serves will take care that his good name will be preserved, if only he himself be careful how he walketh among men. He goes into business, and it sometimes happens to the peacemaker, that circumstances occur in which he is greatly tempted to go to law; but he never doth this, unless he be straitly compelled to it, for he knoweth that law work is playing with edged tools, and that they who know how to use the tools yet cut their own fingers. The peacemaker remembereth that the law is most profitable to those who carry it on, he knows too, that where men will give sixpence to the ministry for the good of their souls, and where they pay a guinea to their physician for the good of their bodies, they will spend a hundred pounds, or five hundred as a refresher to their counsel in the Court of Chancery. So he saith, "Nay better that I be wronged by my adversary, and he get some advantage, than that both of us should lose our all." So he letteth some of these things go by, and he findeth that on the whole, he is none the loser by sometimes giving up his rights. There be times when he is constrained to defend himself, but even then he is ready for every compromise, willing to give way at any time and at any season. He has learned the old adage, that "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure," and so he taketh heed to it, to agree with his adversary quickly while he is yet in the way, letting strife alone ere it be meddled with, or when it be meddled with, seeking to end it as quickly as may be, as in the sight of God.

And then the peacemaker is *a neighbor* and though he never seeketh to meddle with his neighbour's disputes, more especially if it be a dispute between his neighbor and his wife, for well he knoweth that if they two disagree, yet they will both agree very soon to disagree with him, if he meddleth between them; if he be called in when there is a dispute between two neighbors, he never exciteth them to animosity, but he saith to them, "Ye do not well, my brethren; wherefore strive ye with one another?" "And

though he taketh not the wrong side, but seeketh ever to do justice, yet he tempereth ever his justice with mercy, and saith unto the one who is wronged, "Canst not thou have the nobility to forgive?" And he sometimes putteth himself between the two, when they are very angry, and taketh the blows from both sides, for he knows that so Jesus did, who took the blows from his Father and from us also, that so by suffering in our stead, peace might be made between God and man. Thus the peacemaker acts whenever he is called to do his good offices, and more especially if his station enableth him to do it with authority. He endeavoureth, if he sits upon the judgmentseat, not to bring a case to a trial, if it can be arranged otherwise. If he be a minister and there be a difference among his people, he entereth not into the details, for well he knoweth that there is much idle little-tattle, but he saith, "Peace" to the billows, and "Hush" to the Winds, and so he biddeth men live. They have so little while, he thinketh to dwell together, that it were meet they should live in harmony. And so he saith, "How good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

But once again, the peacemaker hath it for his highest title, that he is *a Christian*. Being a Christian, he unites himself with some Christian Church; and here, as a peacemaker, he is as an angel of God. Even among Churches there be those that are bowed down with infirmities, and these infirmities cause Christian men and Christian women to differ at times. So the peacemaker saith, "This is unseemly, my brother; let us be at peace;" and he remembereth what Paul saith, "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord;" and he thinketh that if these two were thus besought by Paul to be of the same mind, unity must be a blessed thing, and he laboureth for it. And sometimes the peacemaker, when he sees differences likely to arise between his denomination and others, turneth to the history of Abram, and he reads how the herdsman of Abram did strive with the herdsman of Lot, and he noteth that in the same verse it is said, "And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled in the land." So he thinketh it was a shame that where there were Perizzites to look on, followers of the true God should disagree. He saith to Christians, "Do not this, for we make the devil sport; we dishonor God; we damage our own cause; we ruin the souls of men;" and he saith, "Put up your swords into your scabbards; be at peace, and fight not one with another." They who be not peacemakers, when received into a Church, will fight upon the smallest crotchet; will differ about the minutest point, and we have known Churches rent in pieces, and schisms committed in Christian bodies through things so

foolish, that a wise man could not perceive the occasion; things so ridiculous, that a reasonable man must have overlooked them. The peacemaker saith, "Follow peace with all men." Specially he prayeth that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of peace, might rest upon the Church at all times, binding believers together in one, that they being one in Christ, the world may know that the Father hath sent his Son into the world, heralded as his mission was with an angelic song — "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

Now, I trust in the description which I have given of the peacemaker, I may have described some of you, but I fear the most of us would have to say, "Well, in many things I come short." However, this much I would add. If there be two Christian men here present, who are at variance with each other, I would be a peacemaker, and bid them be peacemakers too. Two Spartans had quarrelled with each other, and the Spartan king, Aris, bade them both meet him in a temple. When they were both there he heard their differences, and he said to the priest, "Lock the doors of the temple, these two shall never go forth till they be at one," and there, within the temple, he said, "It is unmeet to differ." So they compounded at once their differences and went away. If this was done in an idol temple, much more let it be done in the house of God, and if the Spartan heathen did this, much more let the Christian, the believer in Christ do it. This very day, put aside from you all bitterness and all malice, and say one to another, "If in aught thou hast offended me, it is forgiven, and if in aught I have offended thee, I confess my error, let the breach be healed, and as the children of God, let us be in union with one another." Blessed are they who can do this, for "blessed are the peacemakers!"

II. Having thus described the peacemaker, I shall go on to DECLARE HIS BLESSEDNESS. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." A three-fold commendation is implied.

First, he is *blessed*; that is, God blesseth him, and I wot that he whom God blesseth is blessed; and he whom God curseth, is cursed. God blesseth him from the highest heavens, God blesseth him in a god-like manner; God blesseth him with the abundant blessings which are treasured up in Christ.

And while he is blessed of God, the blessedness is diffused through his own soul. His conscience beareth witness that as in the sight of God through the Holy Spirit, he hath sought to honor Christ among men. More especially is he most blessed when he has been most assailed with curses; for then the

assurance greets him, “So persecuted they the prophets that were before you.” And whereas he has a command to rejoice at all times, yet he finds a special command to be exceedingly glad when he is ill-treated. Therefore, he taketh it well, if for well-doing he be called to suffer, and he rejoiceth thus to bear a part of the Savior’s cross. He goes to his bed, no dreams of enmity disturb his sleep, he riseth and goeth to his business, and he feareth not the face of any man, for he can say, “I have not in my heart anything but friendship towards all,” or if he be attacked with slander, and his enemies have forged a lie against him, he can nevertheless say, —

***“He that forged, and he that threw the dart,
Has each a brother’s interest in my heart.”***

Loving all, he is thus peaceful in his own soul, and he is blessed as one that inherits the blessing of the Most High.

And not infrequently it cometh to pass that he is even blessed by the wicked; for though they would withhold a good word from him, they cannot. Overcoming evil with good, he heapeth coals of fire upon their heads, and melteth the coldness of their enmity, till even they say, “He is a good man.” And when he dieth, those whom he hath made at peace with one another, say over his tomb, “‘Twere well if the world should see many of his like, there were not half the strife, nor half the sin in it, if there were many like to him.”

Secondly, you will observe that the text not only says he is blessed, but it adds, that *he is one of the children of God*. This he is by adoption and grace, but peacemaking is a sweet evidence of the work of the peaceful Spirit within. As the child of God, moreover, he hath a likeness to his Father who is in heaven. God is peaceful, longsuffering, and tender, full of lovingkindness, pity, and compassion. So is this peacemaker. Being like to God, he beareth his Father’s image. Thus doth he testify to men that he is one of God’s children. As one of God’s children, the peacemaker hath access to his Father. He goeth to him with confidence, saying, “Our Father which art in heaven,” which he dare not say unless he could plead with a clear conscience, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” He feels the tie of brotherhood with man, and therefore he feels that he may rejoice in the Fatherhood of God. He cometh with confidence and with intense delight to his Father who is in heaven, for he is one of the children of the Highest, who doeth good both to the unthankful and to the evil.

And still, there is a third word of commendation in the text. "They shall be *called* the children of God." They not only are so, but they shall be called so. That is, even their enemies shall call them so, even the world shall say, "Ah! that man is a child of God." Perhaps, beloved, there is nothing that so strikes the ungodly as the peaceful behavior of a Christian under insult. There was a soldier in India, a big fellow, who had been, before he enlisted, a prizefighter, and afterwards had performed many deeds of valor. When he had been converted through the preaching of a missionary all his messmates made a laughingstock of him. They counted it impossible that such a man as he had been should become a peaceful Christian. So one day when they were at mess, one of them wantonly threw into his face and bosom a whole basonful of scalding soup. The poor man tore his clothes open, to wipe away the scalding liquid and yet self-possessed amidst his excitement, he said, "I am a Christian, I must expect this," and smiled at them. The one who did it said, "If I had thought you would have taken it in that way, I would never have done it; I am very sorry I ever did so." His patience rebuked their malice, and they all said he was a Christian, Thus he was called a child of God. They saw in him all evidence that was to them the more striking, because they knew that they could not have done the same. When Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, was one day walking along the streets, an evil man pushed him from the pavement into the kennel, and as he fell into the kennel, the man said, "Lay there, John Bunyan, that is good enough for you." Mr. Kilpin got up and went on his way, and when afterwards this man wanted to know how he took the insult, he was surprised that all Mr. Kilpin said was, that he had done him more honor than dishonor, for he thought that being called John Bunyan was worth being rolled in the kennel a thousand times. Then he who had done this said that he was a good man. So that they who are peacemakers are "called the children of God." They demonstrate to the world in such a way, that the very blind must see and the very deaf must hear that God is in them of a truth. O that we had grace enough to will this blessed commendation! If God hath brought thee far enough, my hearer, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, I pray thee never cease thy hunger till he has brought thee so far as to be a peacemaker, that thou mayest be called a child of God.

III. But now, in the third place, I am to try and GET THE PEACEMAKER TO WORK.

Ye have much work to do I doubt not, in your own households and your own circles of acquaintance. Go and do it. You remember well that text in

Job — “Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” — by which Job would have us know, that unsavoury things must have something else with them, or else they will not well be pleasant for food. Now, our religion is an unsavoury thing to men: we must put salt with it, and this salt must be our quietness and peace-making disposition. Then they who would have eschewed our religion alone, will say of it, when they see the salt with it, “This is good,” and they will find some relish in this “white of an egg.” If you would commend your godliness to the sons of men, in your own houses make clear and clean work, purging out the old leaven, that ye may offer sacrifices to God of a godly and heavenly sort. If ye have any strifes among you, or any divisions, I pray you, even as God, for Christ’s sake, forgave you, so also do ye. By the bloody sweat of him who prayed for you, and by the agonies of him who died for you, and in dying said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” forgive your enemies, “pray for them that despitefully use you, and bless them that curse you.” Let it be always said of you, as a Christian, “That man is meek and lowly in heart, and would sooner bear injury himself than cause an injury to another.”

But the chief work I want to set you about is this, Jesus Christ was the greatest of all peacemakers. “He is our Peace.” He came to make peace with Jew and Gentile, “for he hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle war of partition between us.” He came to make peace between all striving nationalities, for we are “no more Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all in all.” He came to make peace between his Father’s justice and our offending souls, and he hath made peace for us through the blood of his cross. Now, ye who are the sons of peace, endeavor as instruments in his hands to make peace between God and men. For your children’s soul, let your earnest prayers go up to heaven. For the souls of all your acquaintance and kinsfolk let your supplications never cease. Pray for the salvation of your perishing fellow creatures. Thus will you be peacemakers. And when you have prayed, use all the means within your power. Preach, if God has given you the ability, preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven — the reconciling word of life. Teach, if you cannot preach. Teach the Word. “Be instant in season and out of season.” “Sow beside all waters;” for the gospel “speaketh better things than the blood of Abel,” and crieth peace to the sons of men. Write to your friends of Christ and if you cannot speak much, speak a little for him. But oh! make it the object of your life to win others for Christ. Never be satisfied

with going to heaven alone. Ask the Lord that you may be the spiritual father of many children, and that God may bless you to the ingathering of much of the Redeemer's harvest. I thank God that there are so many among you who are alive to the love of souls. It makes my heart glad to hear of conversions and to receive the converts, but I feel most glad when many of you, converted by my own instrumentality, under God, are made the means of the conversion of others. There be brethren and sisters here, who bring me constantly those who have been brought first to this house by them, over whom they watched and prayed, and at last have brought them to the minister, that he may hear their confession of faith. Blessed are such peacemakers! Ye have "saved a soul from death, and hidden a multitude of sins." "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." They, indeed, in heaven itself "shall be called the children of God." The genealogy of that book, in which the names of all the Lord's people are written, shall record that through God the Holy Ghost they have brought souls into the bond of peace through Jesus Christ.

IV. The minister has now, in the last place, TO PRACTICE HIS OWN TEXT, AND ENDEAVOR THROUGH GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE A PEACEMAKER THIS MORNING.

I speak to many a score of persons this morning who know nothing of peace; for "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "The wicked is like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." I speak not to you with any desire of making a false peace with your souls. Woe to the prophets who say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace!" Rather let me, first of all, that we may make sound work in this matter, expose the peaceless, the warring state of your soul.

O soul! thou art this morning at war with thy conscience. Thou hast tried to quiet it, but it *will* prick thee. Thou hast shut up this recorder of the town of Mansoul in a dark place, and thou hast built a wall before his door, but still, when his fits are on him, thy conscience will thunder at thee and say, "This is not right; this is the path that leadeth unto hell, this is the road of destruction." Oh! there be some of you to whom conscience is as a ghost, haunting you by day and night. Ye know the good, though ye choose the evil, ye prick your fingers with the thorns of conscience when ye try to pluck the rose of sin. To you the downward path is not an easy one; it is hedged up and ditched up, and there be many bars and gates and chains on the road but ye climb over them, determined to ruin your own

souls. Oh! there is war between you and conscience. Conscience says, "Turn," but you say, "I will not." Conscience says, "Close your shop on Sunday," conscience says, "Alter this system of trade, it is cheating;" conscience says, "Lie not one to another, for the Judge is at the door," conscience says, "Away with that drinkingcup, it makes the man into something worse than a brute," conscience says, "Rend yourself from that unchaste connection, have done with that evil, bolt thy door against lust;" but thou sayest, "I will drink the sweet though it damn me, I will go still to my cups and to my haunts though I perish in my sins." There is war between thee and thy conscience. Still thy conscience is God's vicegerent in thy soul. Let conscience speak a moment or two this morning. Fear him not, he is a good friend to thee, and though he speak roughly, the day will come when thou wilt know that there is more music in the very roarings of conscience than in all the sweet and siren tones which lust adopts to cheat thee to thy ruin. Let thy conscience speak.

But more, there is war between thee and God's law. The ten commandments are against thee this morning. The first one comes forward and says, "Let him be cursed, for he denies me. He has another God besides me, his God is his belly, he yieldeth homage to his lust." All the ten commandments, like ten great pieces of cannon, are pointed at thee to-day, for thou hast broken all God's statutes, and lived in the daily neglect of all his commands. Soul! thou wilt find it a hard thing to go to war with the law. When the law came in peace, Sinai was altogether on a smoke, and even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." What will ye do when the law comes in terror, when the trumpet of the archangel shall tear you from your grave, when the eyes of God shall burn their way into your guilty soul, when the great books shall be opened, and all your sin and shame shall be published? Can you stand against an angry law in that day? When the officers of the law shall come forth to devour you up to the tormentors, and cast you away for ever from peace and happiness, sinner, what wilt thou do? Canst thou dwell with everlasting fires? Canst thou abide the eternal burning? O man! "agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

But, sinner, dost thou know that thou art this morning at war with God? He that made thee and was thy best friend thou hast forgotten and

neglected. He has fed thee, and thou hast used thy strength against him. He has clothed thee, — the clothes thou hast upon thy back to-day are the livery of his goodness — yet, instead of being the servant of him whose livery thou nearest, thou art the slave of his greatest enemy. The very breath in thy nostrils is the loan of his charity, and yet thou usest that breath perhaps to curse him, or at the best, in lasciviousness or loose conversation, to do dishonor to his laws. He that made thee has become thine enemy through thy sin, and thou art still to-day hating him and despising his Word. You say, “I do not hate him.” Soul, I charge thee then, “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” “No,” sayest thou, “I cannot, I will not do that! “Then thou hatest him. If thou lovedst him, thou wouldst keep this his great command. “His commandment is not grievous,” it is sweet and easy. Thou wouldst believe in his Son if thou didst love the Father, for “he that loveth the Father loveth him also that is begotten of him.” Art thou thus at war with God? surely this is a sorry plight for thee to be in. Canst thou meet him that cometh against thee with ten thousand? yea, canst thou stand against him who is Almighty, who makes heaven shake at his reproof, and breaks the crooked serpent with a word? Dost thou hope to hide from him? “Can any hide in secret places, that I shall not see him?” saith the Lord. Though thou dig in Carmel, yet will he pluck thee thence. Though thou dive into the caverns of the sea, there shall he command the crooked serpent, and it shall bite thee. If thou make thy bed in hell, he will find thee out. If thou climb to heaven, he is there.” Creation is thy prisonhouse, and he can find thee when he will. Or dost thou think thou canst endure his fury? Are thy ribs of iron? are thy bones brass? If they be so, yet shall they melt like wax before the coming of the Lord God of hosts, for he is mighty, and as a lion shall he tear in pieces his prey, and as a fire shall he devour his adversary, “for our God is a consuming fire.”

This, then, is the state of every unconverted man and woman in this place this morning. You are at war with conscience, at war with God’s law, and at war with God himself. And, now, then, as God’s ambassadors, we come to treat of peace. I beseech you give heed. “As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” “In his stead.” Let the preacher vanish for a moment. Look and listen. It is Christ speaking to you now. Methinks I hear him speak to some of you. This is the way he speaks, “Soul, I love you; I love you from my heart, I would not have you at enmity with my Father.” The tear proves the truth of what he states, while he cries, “How often would I have gathered you, as a hen

gathereth her chickens under her wing, but ye would not.” “Yet,” saith he “I come to treat with you of peace. Come, now, and let us reason together. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Sinner,” saith he, “thou art bidden now to hear God’s note of peace to thy soul, for thus it runs — ‘Thou art guilty and condemned; wilt thou confess this? Art thou willing to throw down thy weapons now, and say, Great God, I yield, I yield, I would no longer be thy foe?’” If so, peace is proclaimed to thee. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Pardon is finely presented to every soul that unfeignedly repents of its sin; but that pardon must come to you through faith. So Jesus stands here this morning, points to the wounds upon his breast, and spreads his bleeding hands, says, “Sin or trust in me and live!” God proclaimeth to thee no longer his fiery law, but his sweet, his simple gospel, believe and live. “He that believeth on the Son is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.” O soul! does the spirit of God move in thee this morning? Dost thou say, “Lord, I would be at peace with thee?” Are you willing to take Christ on his own terms, and they are no terms at all — they are simply that you should make no terms in the matter, but give yourself up, body, soul, and spirit, to be saved of him? Now, if my Master were here visibly, I think he would plead with you in such a way that many of you would say, “Lord, I believe, I would be at peace with thee.” But even Christ himself never converted a soul apart from the Holy Spirit, and even he as a preacher won not many to him, for they were hard of heart. If the Holy Ghost be here, he may as much bless you when I plead in Christ’s stead as though he pleaded himself. Soul! wilt thou have Christ or not? Young men, young women, ye may never hear this word preached in your ears again. Will ye die at enmity against God? Ye that are sitting here, still unconverted, your last hour may come, ere another sabbath’s sun shall dawn. The morrow ye may never see. Would you go into eternity “enemies to God by wicked works?” Soul! wilt thou have Christ or no? Say “No,” if thou meanest it. Say “No, Christ, I never will be saved by thee.” Say it. Look the matter in the face. But I pray you do not say, “I will make no answer.” Come, give Rome answer this morning — ay, this morning. Thank God thou canst give an answer. Thank God that thou art not in hell.

Thank God that thy sentence has not been pronounced — that thou hast not received thy due deserts. God help thee to give the right answer! Wilt thou have Christ or no? “I am not fit.” There is no question of fitness; it is, wilt thou have him? “I am black.” He will come into your black heart and clean it. “Oh, but I am hard-hearted.” He will come into your hard heart and soften it. Wilt thou have him?, — thou canst have him if thou wilt. When God makes a soul willing, it is a clear proof that he means to give that soul Christ; and if thou art willing he is not unwilling; if he has made thee willing, thou mayest have him. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot think that I might have Christ.” Soul, thou mayest have him now. Mary, he calleth thee! John, he calleth thee! Sinner, whoever thou mayest be out of this great throng, if there be in thy soul this morning a holy willingness towards Christ, ay, or if there be even a faint desire towards him, he calleth thee, he calleth thee! O tarry not, but come thou and trust in him. Oh, if I had such a gospel as this to preach to lost souls in hell, what an effect it would have upon them! Surely, surely, if they could once more have the gospel preached in their ears, methinks the tears would bedew their poor cheeks, and they would say, “Great God, if we may but escape from thy wrath, we will lay hold on Christ.” But here it is preached among you, preached every day, till I fear it is listened to as an old, old story. Perhaps it is my poor way of telling it; but God knoweth, if I knew how to tell it better, I would do so. O my Master! send a better ambassador to these men, if that will woo them. Send thou a more earnest pleader, and a more tender heart, if that will bring them to thyself! But oh! bring them, bring them! Our heart longeth to see them brought. Sinner, wilt thou have Christ or not? This morning is the day of God’s power to some of your souls, I know. The Holy Ghost is striving with some of you. Lord, will them, conquer them, overcome them! Do you say, “Yes, happy day! I would be led in triumph, captive to my Lord’s great love?” Soul, it is done, if thou believest. Trust Christ, and thy many sins are all forgiven thee: cast thyself before his dear cross, and say —

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
Into thy arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”*

And if he reject thee, tell us of it. If he refuse thee, let us hear it. There was never such a case yet. He always has received those that come. He always will. He is an open-handed and an open-hearted Savior. O sinner! God

bring thee to put thy trust in him once for all! Spirits above! tune your harps anew; there is a sinner born to God this morning. Lead thou the song, O Saul of Tarsus! and follow thou with sweetest music, O Mary, the sinner! Let music roll up before the throne today; for there are heirs of glory born, and prodigals *have* returned! To God be the glory for ever and ever! Amen.