

SERMON 51

CHRIST THE ONLY PRESERVATIVE AGAINST A REPROBATE SPIRIT

*2 Corinthians 13:5, "Know ye not your own selves,
how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates."*

The doctrines of the gospel are doctrines of peace, and they bring comfort to all who believe in them; they are not like the law given by Moses, which consisted of troublesome and painful ceremonies; neither do they carry with them that terror which the law did; as, "cursed is every one who continueth not to do all things which are written in the book of the law:" If you were to keep the whole law, and break but in one point, you are guilty of the breach of all. The law denounces threatenings against all who do not conform to her strict commands; but the gospel is a declaration of grace, peace and mercy; here you have an account of the blood of Christ, blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel; for Abel's blood cried aloud from vengeance, vengeance. But Jesus Christ's crieth mercy, mercy, mercy upon the guilty sinner. If he comes to Christ, confesses and forsakes his sin, then Jesus will have mercy upon him: And if, my brethren, you are but sensible of your sins, convinced of your iniquities, and feel yourselves lost, undone sinners, and come and tell Christ of your lost condition, you will soon find how ready he is to help you; he will give you his spirit; and if you have his spirit you cannot be reprobates: you will find his spirit to be quickening and refreshing; not like the spirit of the world, a spirit of reproach, envy, and all uncharitableness.

Most of your own experiences will confirm the truth hereof; for are not you reproached and slandered, and does not the world say all manner of evil against you, merely because you follow Jesus Christ; because you will not go to the same excess of riot with them? While they are singing the songs of the drunkard, you are singing psalms and hymns: while they are at a playhouse, you are hearing a sermon: while they are drinking, reveling and misspending their precious time, and hastening on their own

destruction, you are reading, praying, meditating, and working out your salvation with fear and trembling. This is matter enough for a world to reproach you; you are not polite and fashionable enough for them. If you will live godly, you must suffer persecution; you must not expect to go through this world without being persecuted and reviled. If you were of the world, the world would love you; for it always loves its own; but if you are not of the world, it will hate you; it has done so in all ages, it never loved any but those who were pleased with its vanities and allurements. It has been the death of many a lover of Jesus, merely because they have loved him: And, therefore, my brethren, do not be surprised if you meet with a fiery trial, for all those things will be a means of sending you to your master the sooner.

The spirit of the world is hatred; that of Christ is love; the spirit of the world is vexation; that of Christ is pleasure: the spirit of the world is sorrow; that of Christ is joy: the spirit of the world is evil, and that of Christ is good: the spirit of the world will never satisfy us, but Christ's spirit is all satisfaction: the spirit of the world is misery; that of Christ is ease. In one word, the spirit of the world has nothing lasting; but the spirit of Christ is durable, and will last though an eternity of ages: the spirit of Christ will remove every difficulty, satisfy every doubt, and be a means of bringing you to himself, to live with him for ever and ever.

From the words of my text, I shall show you,

I. The necessity of receiving the spirit of Christ.

II. Who Christ is, whose spirit you are to receive. And then

Shall conclude with an exhortation to all of you, high and low, rich and poor, to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ; and to beg that you may receive his spirit, so that you may not be reprobates.

FIRST, I am to show you the necessity there is of receiving the spirit of Christ.

And here, my brethren, it will be necessary to consider you as in your first state; that is, when God first created Adam, and placed him in the garden of Eden, and gave him a privilege of eating of all the trees in the garden, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which stood in the midst

thereof. Our first parents had not been long in this state of innocence, before they fell from it, they broke the divine commands, and involved all their posterity in guilt; for as Adam was our representative, so we were to stand or fall in him; and as he was our federal head, his falling involved all our race under the power of death, for death came into the world by sin; and we all became liable to the eternal punishment due from God, for man's disobedience to the divine command.

Now as man had sinned, and a satisfaction was demanded, it was impossible for a finite creature to satisfy him, who was a God of so strict purity as not to behold iniquity: And man by the justice of God would have been sent down into the pit, which was prepared of old for the devil and his angels; but when justice was going to pass the irrevocable sentence, then the Lord Jesus Christ came and offered himself a ransom for poor sinners. Here was admirable condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ! That he who was in the bosom of his father, should come down from all that glory, to die for such rebels as you and I are, who if it lay in our power, would pull the Almighty from his throne: Now can you think that if there was no need of Christ's death, can you think that if there could have been any other ransom found, whereby poor sinners might have been saved, God would not have spared his only begotten Son, and not have delivered him up for all that believe in him?

This, my brethren, I think proves to a demonstration, that it was necessary for Christ to die: But consider, it will be of no service to know that Christ died for sinners, if you do not accept of his spirit, that you may be sanctified, and fitted for the reception of that Jesus, who died for all those who believe in him. The sin of your nature, your original sin, is sufficient to sink you into torments, of which there will be no end; therefore unless you receive the spirit of Christ you are reprobates, and you cannot be saved: Nothing short of the blood of Jesus applied to your souls, will make you happy to all eternity: Then, seeing this is so absolutely necessary, that you cannot be saved without having received the spirit of Christ, but that ye are reprobates, do not rest contented 'till you have good hopes, through grace, that the good work is begun in your souls; that you have received a pardon for your sins; that Christ came down from heaven, died, and made satisfaction for your sins. Don't flatter yourselves that a little morality will be sufficient to save you; that going to

church, or prayers, and sacrament, and doing all the duties of religion in an external manner, will ever carry you to heaven; no, you must have grace in your hearts; there must be a change of the whole man.

You must be born again, and become new creatures, and have the spirit of Christ within you: And until you have that spirit of Christ, however you may think to the contrary, and please yourselves in your own imagination, I say, you are no better than reprobates. You may content yourselves with leading civil, outward decent lives, but what will that avail you, unless you have the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in your hearts: His kingdom must be set up in your souls; there must be the life of God in the soul of man, else you belong not to the Lord Jesus Christ; and until you belong to him, you are reprobates.

This may seem as enthusiasm to some of you, but if it is so, it is what the apostle Paul taught; and therefore, my brethren, they are the words of truth. I beseech you, in the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, not to despise these words, as if they do not concern you, but were only calculated for the first ages of Christianity, and, therefore, of no signification: If you think thus, you are wronging your own souls; for whatever is written, was written for you in these times, as well as for the Christians in the first ages of the church.

For the case stands thus between God and man: God, at first, made man upright, or, as the sacred penman expresses it, "In the image of God made he man;" his soul was the very copy, the transcript of the divine nature. He who had, by his almighty power, spoken the world into being, breathed into man the breath of spiritual life; and his soul became adorned with purity and perfection. This was the finishing stroke of the creation; the perfection both of the moral and material world; and it so resembled the divine Original, that God could not but rejoice and take pleasure in his own likeness: Therefore, we read, that when God had finished the inanimate and brutish part of the creation, "he looked, and behold it was good." But when that lovely, god-like creature man was made, "behold it was very good."

Happy, unspeakably happy, to be thus partaker of a divine Nature; and thus man might have continued still, had he continued holy; but God placed him in a state of probation, with a free grant to eat of every tree in

the garden, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The day he did eat thereof he was not only to become subject to temporal, but spiritual death; and so lost that divine image, that spiritual life which God had breathed into him, and which was as much his happiness as his glory.

But man, unhappy man, being seduced by the devil, did eat of the forbidden fruit, and thereby became liable to that curse which the eternal God had pronounced on him for his disobedience. And we read, that soon after Adam was fallen, he complained that he was naked; naked, not only as to his body, but naked and destitute of those divine graces which before beautified his soul.

An unhappy mutiny and disorder then fell upon this world; those briars and thorns which now spring up and overspread the earth, were but poor emblems, lifeless representations of that confusion and rebellion which sprung up in, and overwhelmed, the soul of man, immediately after the fall. He now sunk into the temper of a beast and devil.

In this dreadful and disordered condition are all of us brought into the world: We are told, my brethren, that "Adam had a son in his own likeness," or with the same corrupt nature which he himself had sunk into, after eating the forbidden fruit: And experience, as well as scripture, proves, that we are altogether born in sin, and, therefore, incapable, whilst in such a state, to have communion with God.

For as light cannot have communion with darkness, so God can have no communion with such polluted sons of Belial. Here, here, appears the great and glorious end, why Christ was manifest in the flesh, to put an end to these disorders, and to restore us unto the savor of God. He came down from heaven and shed his precious blood upon the cross, to satisfy the divine justice of his Father, for our sins; and so, he purchased this Holy Ghost, who must once more re-stamp the divine image on our hearts, and make us capable of living with, and enjoying of God. We must be renewed by the spirit of God; he must dwell in us before we can be new creatures, and be freed from a reprobate spirit: the spirit of Christ must bring us home unto that fold where all his sheep are, and implant his grace in our hearts, and take from us that spirit of sin which reigns in us: And till this is rooted out of our hearts, however we may flatter ourselves with being good Christians, because we are good moralists, and lead civil, moral,

decent lives, yet if we live and die, my brethren, in this way, we are only flattering ourselves into hell.

I think I have proved, to a demonstration, the necessity there is of receiving the spirit of Christ. I now come to show you,

SECONDLY, Who Christ is, whose spirit you are to receive.

My brethren, (Jesus Christ is coequal, coessential, co-eternal, and consubstantial with the Father, very God of very God; and as there was not a moment of time in which God the Father was not, so there was not a moment of time in which God the Son was not.

Arians and Socinians deny this godhead of Christ, and esteem him only as a creature: The Arians look on him as a titular Deity, as a created and subordinate God; but, if they would humbly search the scriptures they would find divine homage paid to Christ. He is called God in scripture, particularly when the great evangelical Prophet says, "He shall be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the government shall be upon his shoulders:" And Jesus Christ himself says, that he is the Alpha and Omega;" and that "the world was made by him:" But though this be ever so plain, our gay airy sparks of this age will not believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be equal with his Father, and that for no other reason, but because it is a fashionable and polite doctrine to deny his divinity, and esteem him only as a created God.

Our Socinians do not go so far they look upon Christ only to be a good man sent from God, to show the people the way they should go, on their forsaking of Judaism; that he was to be also an example to the world, and that his death was only to prove the truth of his doctrines.

Many of those who call themselves members, yea, teachers of the church of England, have got into this polite scheme. Good God! My very soul shudders at the thoughts of the consequence that will attend such a belief. O my brethren, do not think so dishonorably of the Lord who bought you; of the Jesus who dies for you: he must be all in all unto your souls, if ever you are saved by him: Christ must be your active, as well as passive obedience; his righteousness must be imputed to you. The doctrine of Christ's righteousness being imputed, is a comfortable, a desirable doctrine to all real Christians: And to you, sinners, who are inquiring what you

must do to be saved? How uncomfortable would it be to tell you, by your own good works, when, perhaps, you have never done one good work in all your lives: This would be driving you to despair indeed; no, “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved;” come to the Lord Jesus by faith, and he shall receive you. He is able and willing to save you.

This second person in the Trinity, who is God-man, the mediator of the new covenant; he, my brethren, hath virtue enough, in his blood, to atone for the sins of millions of worlds. As man he died, he was crucified, nailed to, and pierced on the accursed tree: This was the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for you; and will you then have low and dishonorable thoughts of Jesus Christ, after his having done so much for you? O my dear brethren, don’t be so polite as to deny the Deity of Christ; though you may be counted fools in the eye of the world, yet in God’s account, you shall be esteemed wise, wise for salvation.

You may now be looked upon as fools and madmen, as a parcel of rabble, and, in a short time, fit for Bedlam. They may say you are going to undermine the established church; but God knows the secrets of all hearts, knows our innocency; and I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, I should rejoice to see all the world adhere to her articles; I should rejoice to see the teachers, the ministers of the church of England, preach up those very articles they have subscribed to; but those ministers who do preach them up, they esteem as madmen, and look on them as the off-scouring of the earth, unfit for company and conversation.

The evil things they say of me, blessed be God, are without foundation; I am a friend to the church homilies; I am a friend to her liturgy, and if they did not thrust me out of their churches, I would read it every day.

My brethren, I am not for limiting the spirit of God, but am for uniting all in the bonds of love; I love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ: This will make more Christians, than will the spirit of persecution.

The Pharisees may think it madness to mention persecution in a Christian country, but the spirit of persecution resides in many: their will is as great, but blessed be God, they want the power; if they had that, my brethren, fire and faggot is what we must expect, for the devil’s temple is shaken. Many are coming unto Jesus, I hope many of you are already come, and

many more coming; this must make Satan rage, to see his kingdom weakened; he will stir up all his malice against the people of God. We must expect, that a suffering time will certainly come; it is now hastening on, it is ripening a-pace; then it will be proved, to a demonstration, whether you are hypocrites or not; for suffering times are always trying times. O my brethren, do not be afraid of a little reproach, but look on it as a fore-runner of what will be the attendant upon it: Therefore let me, by way of application,

Exhort all of you, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may give you strength to undergo whatsoever he, in his wisdom, calls you to. Come, come, my brethren, to Jesus Christ, and he will give you grace, which will make you willing and ready to suffer all things for Jesus Christ.

It is not being pointed at; it is not being despised and looked on as mad, and a deluded people: Alas! what does this signify to a soul who has Jesus Christ? Do not be afraid to confess the blessed Jesus; dare to be singularly good: Don't be afraid of singing of hymns, or of meeting together to build each other up in the ways of the Lord: Shine ye as lights in the world amidst a crooked and perverse generation.

It is necessary that offenses should come, to try what is in our hearts, and whether we will be faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ or not: Be not content with following Christ afar off, for then we shall, as Peter did, soon deny him; but let us be altogether Christians. Let our speech and all our actions declare to the whole world, whose disciples we are, and that we have determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. O then, then, will it be well with us, happy, unspeakably happy, shall we be, even here; and what is infinitely better, when others that despised us shall be calling for the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, we shall be exalted to sit down on the right hand of God, and shine as the sun in the firmament, and live for ever with our Redeemer. And will not this be a sufficient recompense for all the sufferings you have undergone here? Therefore, do not strive to have the greatness, the riches, the honor, and pleasures of this world, but strive to have Jesus Christ.

Your friends and carnal acquaintance, and, above all, your grand adversary the devil, will be persuading you not to have Christ until you are grown

old; he would have you lay up goods for many years; to see plays, play at cards; go to balls, and masquerades; and to make you the more willing, to draw you in, he calls sinful pleasures, innocent diversions.

A late learned Rabbi of our church, told the people, in a sermon, which I myself heart, that if people went to church of a Sunday, and said the prayers while there, that it was no harm, neither would God count it a sin, to take their recreation, after the service of the church was over: But I say, my brethren, and the command of God says so too, that the whole Sabbath must be kept holy; and that as God has allowed you six days for yourselves, to do the duties in those several stations wherein Providence has place you, he expects you should give him one day to himself; and will you waste that Sabbath which should be spent in gathering provisions for your souls? God forbid!

You had ten thousand times better be ignorant of all the polite diversions of the age, than to be ignorant of the spirit of Christ's being within you, and that it must be, before you are new creatures, and are in Christ; and if you have not an interest in Christ, you are lost, your damnation is hastening on. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

If you stand out against Christ, you are fighting against yourselves. O come unto him, do not stay to bring good works with you, for they will be of no service; all your works will never carry you to heaven, they will never pardon one sin, nor give you the least comfort in a dying hour; if you have nothing more than your own works to recommend you to God, they will not prevent your sinking in that eternal abyss, where there is no bottom.

But come unto Christ, and he will give you that righteousness which will stand you in good account at the great day of the Lord, when he shall come to take notice of them that love him, and of those who have the wedding garment on.

Let all your actions spring from the love of Jesus; let him be the Alpha and Omega of all your actions; then, my brethren, our indifferent ones are acceptable sacrifices; but if this principle be wanting, our most pompous services avail nothing; we are only spiritual idolaters; we sacrifice to our

own net, and make an idol of ourselves, by making ourselves and not Christ, the spring of our actions; and therefore, my brethren, such actions are so far from being accepted by God, that according to the language of one of the articles of our church, “We doubt not but that they have the nature of sin, because they spring not from an experimental faith in, and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Were we not fallen creatures, we might then act upon other principles; but since we are fallen in Adam, and are restored again only by the death of Jesus Christ, the face of things is entirely changed, and all we think, speak, or do, is only accepted in and through him.

Therefore, my brethren, I beseech you, in the bowels of love and compassion, that you would come unto Jesus: Do not go away scoffing, offended, or blaspheming. Indeed, all I say is in love to your souls; and if I could be but an instrument of bringing you to Jesus Christ, if you were to be never so much exalted, I should not envy, but rejoice in your happiness: If I was to make up the last of the train of the companions of the blessed Jesus, it would rejoice me to see you above me in glory. I do not speak out of a false humility, a pretended sanctity; no, God is my judge, I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, I would willingly go to prison, or to death for you, so I could but bring one soul from the devil’s strong holds, into the salvation which is by Christ Jesus.

Come then unto Christ every one that hears me this night; I offer Jesus Christ, pardon, and salvation to all you, who will accept thereof. Come, O ye drunkards, lay aside your cups, drink no more to excess; come and drink of the water which Christ will give you, and then you will thirst no more: come, O ye thieves; let him that has stolen, steal no more, but fly unto Christ and he will receive you. Come unto him, O ye harlots; lay aside your lusts and turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, he will cleanse you of all your sins, and wash you in his blood. Come, all ye liars; come, all ye Pharisees; come, all ye fornicators, adulterers, swearers, and blasphemers, come to Christ, and he will take away all your filth, he will cleanse you from your pollution, and your sins shall be done away. Come, come, my guilty brethren; I beseech you for Christ’s sake, and for your immortal soul’s sake, to come unto Christ: Do not let me knock at the door of your hearts in vain, but open and let the King of

Glory in, and he will dwell with you, he will come and sup with you this night; this hour, this moment he is ready to receive you, therefore come unto him.

Do not consult with flesh and blood, let not the world hinder you from coming to the Lord of life: What are a few transitory pleasures of this life worth? They are not worth your having, but Jesus Christ is a pearl of great price, he is worth the laying out all you have, to buy.

And if you are under afflictions, fly not to company to divert you, neither read what the world calls harmless books; they only tend to harden the heart, and to keep you from closing with the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was a child, yea, when I came to riper years, God knows, it is with grief I speak it, when ignorant of the excellency of the word of God, I read as many of these harmless books as any one; but now I have tasted the good word of life, and am come to a more perfect knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; I put away these childish, trifling things, and am determined to read no other books but what lead me to a knowledge of myself, and Jesus Christ.

Methinks I could speak till midnight unto you, my brethren; I am full of love towards you; let me beseech you to fly to Christ for succor: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;" therefore delay not, but strive to enter in at the strait gate; do not go the broad way of the polite world, but choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: You will have a reward afterwards, that will make amends for all the taunts, jeers, and calamities you may undergo here.

And will not the presence of Christ be a sufficient reward for all you have suffered for his name's sake? Why will you not accept of the Lord of glory? Do not say you have not heard of Christ, for he is now offered to you, and you will not accept of him; do not blame my master, he is willing to save you, if you will but lay hold on him by faith; and if you do not, your blood will be required of your own heads.

But I hope that you will not let the blood of Jesus be shed in vain, and that you will not let my preaching be of no signification. Would you have me go and tell my master, you will not come, and that I have spent my

strength in vain; I cannot bear to carry so unpleasing a message unto him, I would not, indeed, I would not be a swift witness against any of you at the great day of accounts; but if you will refuse these gracious invitations, and not accept of them, I must do it: and will it not move your tender hearts to see your friends taken up into heaven, and you yourselves thrust down into hell? But I hope better things of most of you, even that you will turn unto the Lord of love, the Jesus who died for you, that in the day when he shall come to take his people to the mansions of everlasting rest, you may hear his voice, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter into the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world.” And that we may all enter into that glory, do thou, O Jesus, prepare us, by thy grace; give us thy spirit; and may our hearts be united to thee: May the word that has now been spoken, take deep root in thy people’s hearts, that it may spring up and bring forth fruit, in some thirty, in some forty, and in some an hundred fold; do thou preserve them while in this life from all evil, and keep them from falling, and at last present them faultless before thy Father, when thou comest to judge the world, that where thou art, they may be also. Grant this, O Lord Jesus Christ, with whatever else thou seest needful for us, both at this time and for evermore.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honor, power, glory, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore, Amen.