

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

## A SERMON

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,  
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AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHAD WELL STREET,  
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"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." {1 Corinthians. 4: 20}.

As the everlasting love of God is expressed in effectual calling, it is said, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." God had His eye upon Saul of Tarsus before he was called by grace. He was preserved in Christ Jesus before His soul was born again. His name was in heaven and his person was beloved by God in Christ, and therefore, notwithstanding his pharisaism and cruel and bloodthirsty persecution of the church of God, he was followed from place to place by a special providence and in due time conquered by irresistible grace. "Other sheep," said the Saviour, "I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." Saul was not in the fold when the great Shepherd of Israel uttered these words. He was then a very young man, but he was a Pharisee of the strictest sect,

notwithstanding his secret and unknown interest in the everlasting love of God. The time of love, however, came; and when the period had arrived, it broke forth, and the long concealed grace and mercy of God arrested him. His heart was then broken, his conscience was stung, his soul was filled with godly sorrow and repentance; and as God had said, "I will turn to the people a pure language," his language was changed and he was heard saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Taken into a street in the city of Damascus, Ananias was sent to him. That sheep, however, Ananias, objected at first, to the visit, fearing that he was still a wolf. "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem, and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon Thy name." "Go thy way," said the Shepherd; "for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." And not only so "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." That prediction was soon fulfilled. Saul received Divine assurance of forgiveness; His spirit was led into the sweet enjoyment of gospel liberty; He received spiritual and official gifts from his Master for his work, and commenced preaching the glorious gospel of the grace of God; and from the very first of his official career he suffered in the Saviour's cause. Having himself been a bitter persecutor, he met with persecution and fiery trials all the days of his life; some of his sufferings being described in the chapter out of which I have taken my text. It is very mysterious that the prime ministers, if I may so speak, of the church of Jesus Christ should have suffered as they did,

yet so it was ; and the Apostle in the 9th verse says, " I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death ; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," in allusion, perhaps to the cruel and bloody entertainments which were provided for the people in the city of Rome. Their theatres were filled on various occasions with thousands of spectators whose object was to see their fellow men destroyed by one another, or by wild beasts, and the most celebrated of all the sufferers were the last that were taken into the arena, and the eyes of all were fixed upon them; and the Apostle says, " I think He (that is God) had set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death, a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men." The world sat round about as it were and watched their movements and sorrows, and angels good and bad watched their engagements and sufferings. "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, hut ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised and then follow statements which are truly wonderful. "Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place. Where are the ministers of the gospel of the present day that can truthfully use this language? The apostles hungered, wanted bread; thirsted, wanted water; were naked, badly clothed, and had no home. No man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him. A proud blasphemer, one that curses the name of his Maker, and hates the hand that supplies his wants from day to day, is sometimes very rich, whilst a dear saint of the Most High who lives near to God and has much to do with Him, is pinched with

poverty or like Paul is almost forced to say, I hunger and thirst, am badly clothed and almost homeless. Whilst the Apostle was an object of Divine love, and could say, "Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me," yet he went through scenes of privation, persecution and temptation day by day. This object of Divine love, living in fellowship and communion with God, was yet naked, horn Jess, and without the ordinary comforts of life. The Lord Jesus Christ, however, never left him: Paul was never forsaken, but was sustained in his work; and, the love of Christ constraining him he was determined in preaching the gospel "to know nothing among men save Christ and Him crucified. But the apostle was not only hated by Satan and the world, and his own nation the Jews, he was despised by a number of the members of the church at Corinth. " Now some," he says "are puffed up, as though I would not come to you ; but I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power, for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

Now, let us give our attention to this portion of the Word, and make a few remarks on the kingdom of God indicated in the text. By this kingdom I understand the dominion of reigning, saving, sovereign and eternal grace and mercy. The dominion of grace under the gospel dispensation, and not as it appeared under the ceremonial dispensation, though that also was the kingdom of God. The phrase "the kingdom of God," in the New Testament, often relates to the Gospel, so that here we understand the rule, the empire of grace in the church of the living God, and its reign in the hearts and consciences of saved sinners. Now, this kingdom is not in word only,

whether it be considered in connection with the gospel dispensation or the church of Jesus Christ, or as seated in the hearts of regenerated persons; the gospel of God comes not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. This kingdom is to be contrasted with other kingdoms. Pilate had strange feelings when looking at the suffering Man who stood before him, he said, "Art thou a king, then? And Jesus said unto him, My kingdom is not of this world ; for if it were, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews : but now is my kingdom," not from hence; or I have a kingdom, but it is spiritual. The kingdom of God is to be contrasted with the kingdoms of the world, with the legal dispensation, and with the various systems of error which were then in existence and are in existence now, and which perhaps, will continue to exist until the end of time. But this Divine kingdom is to be contrasted with another kingdom which is not often referred to, I mean antichrist—the man of sin—or mystical Babylon. As Egypt and Babylon, both of which were the oppressors of the people of God, were destroyed, so the time is coming when Rome or Antichrist shall cease to exist, being cast as a mill-stone into the sea, and be found no more at all. That kingdom is now in existence, and it consists in words and forms and ceremonies, and the power connected with it is political, human, and carnal, and the power of error; and therefore, the whole of it is delusive and dangerous, and presents a striking contrast to the kingdom of God. The grace of God is not popery, for that has nothing to do in fact with grace in the heart, seeing the kingdom of God is not in word but in saving power. That is a part of

the kingdom of Satan, and round about are the kingdoms of the world ; but in the midst of these kingdoms God has set up a kingdom, which is inhabited by the saints of the Most High, where they shall live, and flourish, and thrive, until the end of time; and when all is perfected and completed, then Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority, and power. All other rule is to terminate, righteous and unrighteous; for there is such a thing as righteous reigning and ruling on earth. Our Queen is our rightful sovereign, and, permit me so to express myself, the men in authority over us are in their proper places, but all authority, power and dominion shall be put down, and one kingdom, one King, and one throne only shall appear, and stand for ever, and be surrounded by the subjects of God's grace. That King, that kingdom, that throne, and the millions that are loved with an everlasting love, and are bought with the precious blood of Jesus, and constituted the temples of God the Holy Ghost, are God's, " who shall be all in all."

What is the origin of the kingdom of God? Why, God Himself is its Author: it originated in the mind and bosom of Deity. The whole of it was foreknown and fore ordained, all its subjects were perfectly and universally known by its great Proprietor and Ruler. This kingdom is gradually and progressively coming into actual existence, as it was originally conceived in the mighty mind of the great God. All the thoughts of His mind and the love of His heart are being really and truly actualized as time progresses, as generations rise and depart, as devils tempt, and as angels watch over the people of God; and as

Jesus upon His throne, works and applies His word here, there, and yonder. His eternal thought comes up into fulfillment gradually and progressively as time advances. This is the origin of the kingdom. Then for the establishment of it in the world. It arises out of love, and it is founded on the blood of the covenant, even the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He came to lay its foundation, yea, He is the foundation itself. It is a Mediatorial Kingdom, being based on the mediation of Christ, which is inseparable from it; for to separate mediation from this kingdom would be to remove its foundation. The whole would collapse, fall and disappear, if Christ could be removed from it; for the kingdom of God is based upon His dear Son. "What shall one then, answer the messengers or ambassadors of the nation?" said the children of Israel, when they come and see us in such confusion and surrounded by hosts of soldiers, and having thousands of beings hostile to us, and being hated by all the world? Why, tell them that "the Lord hath founded Zion," notwithstanding the troubles that surround her, "and the poor of His people shall betake themselves unto it." In the infinite mind of God, the grand plan of the kingdom was formed, and the dear Redeemer putting away sin, and harmonizing the perfections of God, the kingdom was established. And where is its seat? Vitally, it is in the heart, locally it is in the world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And we have it here in this little island home of ours among the nations of the Gentiles. But the kingdom of God is within you. It is not only near to us, visible to us, it is in contact with, yea, in vital connection with us. If there is nothing of grace in us here, we are not subjects of the Lord

Jesus Christ, for the kingdom of God is in the heart.

What is the extent of this kingdom? I do not know. We are told, however, that when God's operations are completed, a number shall appear before His throne which no man can number. It appears to me that notwithstanding the restricted and limited views which some people seem to take, God's kingdom will be the largest, as it will be the best, the richest, and the noblest and the most glorious of all kingdoms. The kingdom of God will be the greatest of kingdoms, for in all things Christ shall have the pre-eminence. I will not speculate as to whether there will be more sheep on the right hand than goats on the left, nor as to the number of the subjects of this kingdom:

*"Saviour, if of Zion's city,  
I through grace a member am,  
Let the world deride or pity,  
I will glory in Thy name."*

And then with regard to its duration. How long will it stand? Well, it will stand till all other kingdoms disappear; it will stand till the end of time; it will stand when the heavens are opened to receive the millions of God's people, and it will endure in heaven as long as God Himself endures, for Christ will be a King and will have subjects for ever. He will sway His sceptre and wear His crown for ever and He will for ever have happy worshippers before His throne. The kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and the dominion of grace shall never, never end.

*"Grace, till the tribes redeemed by blood,  
Are brought to know themselves and God,  
Her empire shall maintain,  
To call -when Ho appoints the day,  
And from the mighty take the prey,  
Shall grace triumphant reign."*

"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." I might just say here, that I believe this kingdom is an aggressive one. Infinite benevolence is associated with it; but whilst it is here, it is in a militant condition. It is by means of His kingdom on the earth that God is spreading abroad the knowledge of Himself. Some of you are aware that I am officially connected with a little Society, called the Strict Baptist Mission, which has stations in India and Ceylon, in which the ordinances of God's house are observed, and the truth of Jesus Christ is preached ; and when I think that Christians are disseminating the word and endeavoring to spread abroad a knowledge of the plan of salvation and of the Saviour s name and that God is blessing these efforts, I see an illustration of this fact, that the kingdom of God is aggressive. The Word of God is in this kingdom, and His grace is seated there for it is the creation of His grace and the exponent of His eternal truth. The grace that has made us what we are should evermore appear in our character, our course, and our conversation; for in bringing the kingdom of God into the world, and giving it a visible existence here, grace has appeared to all men, as to its power and effects. If you want proofs of the grace of

God, look at God's kingdom in this hostile world. If you want proofs of its sovereignty, look at a saint going home to heaven, against wind and tide, being carried along by an unseen influence which enables him to persevere in a course of holiness against himself, and the world, and the devil. The perseverance of a saint proclaims the sovereignty of grace and the nature of true religion.

Let me now notice a few things in connection with the power of the kingdom. First the Author of this power. The Apostle puts it negatively and positively. It is not in word, but in power. Not in the word or words of any creature, angels, great men, ministers of the gospel, nor the Apostle Paul himself; for he says "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." If the Apostle Paul could do nothing more than sow the seed, and could not cause it to grow, what should be said of myself and other ordinary ministers of the Gospel? Not in word; and yet the Apostle's words, were righteous, scriptural, and forcible; they fell from sanctified lips, and expressed the faith and feelings of a sanctified heart; but the kingdom of God is not in word, but in the power of God. Look at creature power. We have political, civil, and intellectual power; but these powers can never vitally Christianize an immortal mind. We have many Christians who are made so by words, or by a few drops of water sprinkled upon the faces of little helpless and unconscious babes, which are said to constitute them Christians! That, however, is not how God makes Christians, not how grace gets her subjects; for the kingdom of God is neither in word, nor in human or any creature power. The power of eloquence is great, and an eloquent preacher

brings together hundreds, perhaps thousands of hearers ; and religion is so superficial in these days, that the thousands who surround him, are in the opinion of the public^ the sons and daughters of God. May it not be said (and I am not bitter) that in a very great measure the faith of many such persons "stands in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God?" Let the eloquence of the preacher leave him, or let the eloquent preacher leave the congregation, and it will as a rule melt away as snow melts before the sun. Salvation by grace is not in word but in power, and its author is God Himself. And He continues to work without weariness. Under shepherds are weary, tired and get worn out, and all human power becomes exhausted; but God goes on working without weariness, for He "fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding." The mother says, especially if she has twins and brings them up herself, "I am faint," and well she may, having two strong children sucking her breasts from day to day. She is faint and weary. God's breasts of consolation, however, are sucked by millions of His people, but "He fainteth not neither is weary." His breasts are always full, His arm is always strong, His fullness is always the same, and He fainteth not. "I will work, and who shall let it What a blessing it is to be interested in a God whose arm never aches, whose eye is never dim, whose supplies can never fail, whose love can never change, whose ear can never become heavy, and whose watchfulness is incessant, divine, and perfect like Himself! The kingdom of God is in Divine power. It is a new creating power. It was a marvelous act by which matter was brought into existence, and

various shapes and forms were given to it, and which vitalized the creatures made. God completed His work in six days, and reviewing the whole He was satisfied and pleased, for it was good. Now, there is another act of power in progress by which the new creation of God is gradually coming into existence. God brought the old creation into existence in six days, and He is now proceeding with His new creating work, and will not finish it until the last day, when the bodies of His people shall be raised and reunited to their spirits, and the heavens shall be filled with the subjects of His grace. Was the whole creation satisfactorily completed when it was finished? He will complete His new creation, and be infinitely pleased and delighted then with His work.

*“When God makes up His last account,  
Of natives in His holy mount;  
'Twill be an honor to appear  
As one new-born and nourished there.”*

May you and I be found in the kingdom of God as the subjects of His grace.

Thirdly, the nature of this power. If God is its Author, it is Divine, you say. Well, just one or two thoughts here. If God is the source of this power, it is sovereign; or if you like it in another form, it is Divine power Sovereignty displayed, as to places and persons. There are dark corners in the world, and even in this land of ours, notwithstanding that it is called a Christian country. I have some villages in my thoughts now, in which there are churches and preachers, and large incomes, where the parishioners are without

knowledge, and I grieve over it. Many years ago I labored not far from the places I am now alluding to, and the people were, and still are, as to divine and eternal things, almost as ignorant as Hottentots, not knowing their right hand from their left, as to the character and government of God. God is a Sovereign, and does not always send a flood of gospel light all over the world. How is it that when one stands up in His name to preach the Gospel, God does not call every hearer under the word? I do not know. He puts His fear into this heart, and that, and the other, and He giveth no account of any of His matters. And then you sometimes come to the house of God dejected and depressed, and go away in the same state; and another time you come depressed and faint, and cast down, and you get a blessing. How is it you are not always blessed, and always fare and feel alike? Oh the kingdom of God is not in word, but in the power of God, which He displays as He pleases. If God will help me, I can preach a little; but I have no power to apply the Word; for if I had, I love the Word and your souls so well, that I would always lay the promises on your hearts, and give you the grace of the Word. I would always sweep away all your doubts and fears, and break your unbelief, and give you faith; but power belongeth unto God, and His kingdom is not in word, but in power, which is sovereign in its operations. And then is it not irresistible power? It is said that we resist the grace and Spirit of God. Well then, if we admit the word "resist," let us follow it by another—"frustrate if we resist, can we frustrate the will and defeat the purposes of God? You walk in the field, or in the road, and a hundred ants crawl upon your boot, all possessing stings. You take your

handkerchief, and wipe the little resisting things away, and do not feel their resistance. The sinner resists God's grace, and the poor lost rebel resists His power. And does God stop because He is resisted? Does power divine hesitate or falter, because the rebel means, if possible, to continue in rebellion? God says, "I will work;" and He takes the heart, and turns it, I had almost said, inside out; and, according to the good pleasure of His will, He discovers the guilty sinner to himself, who then says, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." The kingdom is in divine, sovereign, irresistible power. I should like, however, to say, since we are living in stirring times, that this power is silent in its operations. You know what I mean. People in the present day appear to me to have an idea that there is no religion without noise and show; hence we have pipes, and fiddles, and drums, and banners, and I don't know what, as if true religion and the kingdom of grace consisted in noise, and pomp, and show. But "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Paul was in the city of Corinth; and God said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, and no man shall set upon thee, to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." Ordinary observers would not have thought that God had much people there; but Paul preached, and God applied the Word that was spoken, without the use of banners and musical instruments. God does not require them; they are altogether foreign to the simplicity of the Gospel, and the salvation of heaven; for the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, but with a power which nobody sees, for its operations are silent and internal. The power is represented as being the power of life. You cast a grain of wheat into

the ground, and if the vital principle be good and perfect, the influences of nature being favorable, it will take root downwards, and spring upwards, and though the first little blade be so tender that you could scarcely take it between your finger and thumb without injuring it, yet notwithstanding its softness and tenderness it will force its way through the hard soil towards the sun, which influences it, though a weight of soil lies upon it, for there is wonderful power in life. It is neither a mechanical power nor a dead weight, but a vital power which grows. The power of the Spirit is compared to fire, which warms, consumes, and melts; to wind, which is sovereign and irresistible, and to oil, which dropped upon the soul silently permeates the mind, and sanctifies its recipient.

The operation of this power. Take this one thought. It is a transforming power; it changes the sinner towards God, but not God towards the sinner. Repentance is a change, but not a change in God towards the penitent. This power of God changes the sinner towards God, towards the Bible, towards the church, towards the world, towards sin, towards the devil, towards the saints, and towards heaven. It transforms him in all these respects. It finds him hating God; it leaves him loving Him, or desiring to do so. It finds him at a distance from God; it brings him near. It finds him neglecting the Bible, it leaves him a prayerful Bible student; it finds him sneering at the saints, and persecuting them, it leaves him singing—

*“With them numbered may I be,  
Now and through eternity.”*

It finds him loving sin, it leaves him hating it, and loving

holiness. Yes, the power of God, in which this kingdom stands, is a transforming power. And then as to one's experience of this power, how blessed it is to receive pardon from God, and to be led into liberty by God the Spirit! To receive an application of atoning blood, and of the promises. Have you not sometimes been in the house of God, overflowing with holy feeling, your eyes and your hearts, and your mouths being filled, when the last hymn was sung? Oh there is a secret joy connected with God's reign of grace in the heart, a secret power which cannot be resisted, which melts the soul, fills the eye, makes the man stronger than his enemies, and carries him out of and beyond himself. Yes—

*"The hill of Zion yields  
A thousand sacred sweets,  
Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets."*

The kingdom of God is in power, and not in word. The medium through which this power is communicated is the Word of God. You know efficiency is never owing to the adaptability or excellence of the instrument. The pen on your desk may be a perfect one, but it requires a hand to use it, and the writing then will not be good, notwithstanding the excellence of the pen, unless the agent be a good writer. Efficiency is always owing to the agent, and not to the instrument. Bad work may be done with a good instrument, and good work may be done with an indifferent one; but when the instrument and the agent are both perfect, the work will surely be satisfactory. The instrument is the Gospel, the Agent is the God of the Gospel, and

when God uses His own Word by His own hand a wondrous change is effected, a change that is worthy of Himself, and over which angels rejoice and sing. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen,