

CHRIST EXALTED,
AND
THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN.

A
Sermon
Preached

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"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." — {Acts. 2: 32, 33}.

It will be remembered that before His ascension into heaven the Lord said to His disciples, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." But they were to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Having given this charge to his disciples, Jesus ascended to His Father; and our Father, to His God and our God, from whence in due time he fulfilled the promise which He made to His disciples, and also the covenant engagements into which He had entered with His divine Father. On the day of Pentecost He poured out in a miraculous manner His blessed Spirit upon His church, according to His word, and the hopes and expectations of His servants. Peter had preached in the day of Christ's flesh; but he never preached the Gospel before the

death and resurrection of the Saviour, as he preached it on the day of Pentecost, for we learn that when Jesus spoke, concerning His death, Peter took Him aside, and rebuked Him. Peter could not bear to hear of the sufferings and death of His Master, and none of the disciples would accept the fact that He was about to leave them, and therefore, they said one to another, "What is this that He saith unto us: A little while, and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while, and ye shall see me; and because I go unto the Father? What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith." However, the time came when Jesus died, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and the disciples having lost the personal presence of their Master, remained, according to His orders, in the city of Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost the promise was fulfilled; a marvelous measure of Divine "power" was poured down upon their heads and their hearts, and the Old Testament—the New was not then in existence—appeared to them as a new book. The prophecies, the promises, and the doctrines of grace, as recorded in the Old Testament were understood, and Peter, for the first time, "preached" the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." On the day of Pentecost they saw that the death of their Lord was essential to salvation ; that the blood of the dear Redeemer was required to put away sin, and that God could not be just, and the justifier of the ungodly, without the interposition of that Ransom. Therefore having received the Holy Spirit they proceeded to address the multitude in various languages. Some of the people sneered and mocked, and others said, "These men are full of new wine." But Peter being divinely inspired, rose, and preached the Gospel in the new light and power which he had received from heaven, and my text forms a part of the first sermon preached after the outpouring of the Spirit. "This Jesus," said Peter, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of

the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Let me Endeavour simply to illustrate the text, and in so doing you perceive that we shall have to notice three things. First, the resurrection of the Lord; and, secondly, His exaltation at the right hand of God; and, thirdly and lastly, the effusion of the Holy Spirit: "He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

In the first place, let me offer a few observations upon the resurrection of our glorious Lord. I dare say some of my remarks this morning will be doctrinal, but I have long believed that there is no spiritual meat or drink, no spiritual honey, milk or wine, for the saints of God, without the glorious doctrines of grace. The incarnation of the Son of God is a wonderful doctrine; His obedient life and sacrificial death are glorious themes, and it is also very blessed when one is influenced by the Holy Ghost to dwell upon His burial and resurrection. It is said emphatically in the Word, that Jesus died, and was buried. He did not return to life immediately after He had died on the cross. It was necessary that he should enter the grave; necessary that He should lie there three days and three nights; necessary that He should conquer death in his own territories, and necessary that He should sanctify the tomb for the sleeping dust of all His blood-bought people. Our great Redeemer is now Lord of all, having taken possession of all things for Himself. He has taken possession of His church; He has taken possession of all the grace that is required to save His people; He has taken possession of death; He has taken possession of the grave; He has taken possession of heaven, and of all those mansions which eternal love ordained; and He has left on record a blessed and precious promise for His people: "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." In looking at the resurrection of Jesus, we shall first regard it as a proof of the fact that His great saving work is done,

or that redemption is finished for ever. Had not redemption been completed, had not our debts been fully and eternally paid, had not our guilt been quite expiated, and our sin wholly put away, Justice would not have opened the Saviour's tomb, and eternal righteousness and truth would not have permitted our great Surety to leave the prison. Blessed for ever be the name of the Redeemer, He is not in the grave, but on the throne; He is not in the world, but at the right hand of God; and that He is there proves the real and blessed fact upon which our hope rests, that redemption's great work is done; that the perfections of God have been brought together in everlasting beauty and harmony, and that there is eternal peace between the everlasting God and man. That the blood that was demanded has been shed, and the atonement that was required has been made and taken into heaven, appeasing for ever the great Jehovah on His throne, Christ's resurrection makes clear. I hardly know how to receive the words of Dr. Watts, when speaking of God's throne—

*"Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame?"*

Well the throne of God is not now a seat of wrath, neither does it shoot devouring flame; for the blood of Jesus has been taken within the vail, sprinkled upon that high and majestic throne, and there are no fires now to quench; no curses now to inflict, and no attributes now to reconcile. The heavens of eternal glory are everlastingly filled with the fragrance of the Saviour's atonement, and mercy reigns over guilty men. Grace reigns righteously and equitably; so that God is just, and yet the Justifier of them that believe in him. When the blood was taken into heaven, God smelled a sweet savour of rest, and eternal justice descended in connection with angels, and rolled back the stone that was over the grave of Emmanuel, and He that was dead came forth, and thus the resurrection of our Lord forms a

part of the foundation of our imperishable hopes. He has left the tomb. This Jesus has God raised up; for His work was done.

Let us look at this subject for a few minutes. His work as a servant was done. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and engaged to serve His Father by fulfilling His laws and demands, and by accomplishing His purposes; for His work consisted in obeying the law, and making it for ever honorable. Our Lord commenced His work of obedience when He entered the world; for He was made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law. He lived for three-and-thirty years under a broken law, and obeyed in the place of transgressors, and as He proceeded with His work He left perfection behind Him, whilst before Him there were guilt and curse. He gave a glory to every precept, or a perfect obedience to every requirement and demand of God, and having reached the end of the precept His cross was set up, and He was nailed to it, where He bore the penalty due to sin, and bowed His head, and said, My work as a Servant is completed; my obedience is perfect and saving. He took His obedience, and presented it to His Father, saying, Father, will it do? And the Father said, I am well pleased with Thee, for Thy righteousness' sake, for Thou hast magnified the law, and made it honorable. And now that same righteousness, as He sits upon the throne, He presents to the guilty, sensible sinner, and says, Sinner, will it do for you? It is My obedient life, and My Father has accepted it with tokens of divine approval—will it do for you? And this righteousness cast upon the guilty, and covering the unclean, induces him to sing—

*“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anght to my charge shall lay?
Fully through Christ absolved I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and shame.”*

Yes, the work of the Redeemer as the Father's Servant is finished. The sufferings of our Lord were penal. He bore every penal woe; swallowed up every penal sorrow, having received every curse. The curse of God is a heavy, fiery, and burning reality. It is hell, and it raged around the suffering person of the Redeemer, as He hung on the accursed tree. As it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." His precious soul was filled with a sense of wrath, and His precious heart was enveloped in the curses of a broken law. God smote Him as He never smote a being before; for there is not a mere creature that could survive the blow that fell upon the glorious person of God's beloved Son. The damned in hell suffer the curses of the law, but they fall not there upon lost finite creatures as they fell upon our incarnate suffering Saviour. God took all the vials of wrath which had been accumulating from the fall, and emptied them upon the head of His Son, and Jesus lived to receive and to exhaust them all; and when the last drop had been poured out, the Father said, "It is done;" and Christ said, "It is finished," and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. There are now afflictions for me and for you, but nothing penal has been left by our Lord. Our sufferings are not judgments, but chastisements; they are not curses, but blessings. They do not come from the judicial, but from the parental hand of our God. They do not come from the broken law or the law of works, but from the covenant of eternal grace. They are not intended to appease God, to satisfy justice, or to remove sin; for all that was done by our great Emmanuel, and He that did it all has been raised from the grave. "This Jesus," whom we preach, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

The work of Christ as the Captain of salvation was completed. The world was before Him, with all its blandishments, pleasures, pains, and curses. It was before Him to condemn, and to applaud; but our great

Emmanuel was equally dead to its applause, its condemnation, its pleasures, and its pains; and went on conquering and to conquer, in His own great might. Just before He met the last foe, He said to His disciples, "In the world you shall have tribulation," and it will be deep and bitter; for "the time is coming when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Sometimes our brethren in prayer say, "We are passing through an enemy's land to our heavenly and eternal rest." Dr. Watts was not of that opinion—

*"We're marching through Emmanuel's ground,
To fairer worlds on high."*

There are enemies in the land; but the land itself belongs to our Lord, the world having been conquered and overcome by Him. It is Christ's property, and He reigns in, and reigns over it, for His beloved people; and hence as the Conqueror of the world He said, "Be of good cheer." You shall have tribulation below, but you shall have peace in Me. And what was Christ's conflict with the devil, during forty days and nights in the wilderness perhaps we shall never know. I would not go too far or too deep into the mystery of temptation; but some of my beloved friends have met the great arch-fiend more than once, and received his arrows, and been tempted by him to doubt almost everything. You have been tempted to doubt the existence of almost everything recorded in the Bible, and to doubt the existence of beings whose character is described there. Have not vile thoughts, abominable feelings and heart-polluting ideas swarmed in your minds, and have you not under such circumstances been filled with terror, and shaken as an aspen leaf ! Oh what were the temptations that surrounded and enveloped the great Captain of our salvation ! The devil invented all he could invent, and forged every arrow that he could forge, and hurled all at the Lord of life and glory. But, bless His name! it is said that

“when the devil had ended all the temptations he departed from him for a season;” and our Lord came forth unstained, uninjured, and undamaged. Satan’s temptations on that occasion were as the way of a ship in the sea, or as the way of a serpent on the rock. The Rock of Ages was there, and the old serpent crawled about Him, and had it been possible would have injected his filth into His glorious person; but the Redeemer was untarnished by it all. His work as a Conqueror was completed, and hence He was raised from the dead. But He had another foe to meet, and that was death, with its ten thousand stings: for “He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.” I wish I could enter deeply into the fact that our blessed Redeemer bore all the terrors of death that were due to our transgression. What it is to die we do not yet know, and what it is to die for sin and under the burden of guilt we cannot tell; but our Lord met death with all its stings, and tasted it for everyone that shall sing His glorious praises in heaven. And when the sting of death was quite extracted, and death itself was wholly conquered; then our Lord bowed His head, and gave up the ghost; and because the world, and the devil and death were all vanquished at His feet, having lost their power, the Father raised Him from the dead. And, lastly, his work as a priestly Saviour was completed. As the great High Priest of our profession. He offered Himself without spot to God, and having expiated and put away our guilt, and appeased the eternal Jehovah, He has entered within the veil, there to appear in the presence of God for us. The resurrection of our Lord is a proof of the fact that salvation is a finished work. If it were not, the resurrection of Jesus would have been impossible. He is not in the grave; He is risen, and we rejoice.

In the second place His resurrection is a sweet pledge of ours. It is a proof of the completion of Christ’s work, and a pledge of the resurrection of His people. He died as a common person, I mean as the Head and

Representative of the church. He was buried as a common person, and not as an isolated individual, and in this capacity He rose from the dead. When He came out of the grave He represented all His beloved people, and inasmuch as He who is the resurrection and the life, and also the great Head of the church is now living on high, where He is His members must also be for ever. Our union to Jesus requires our resurrection, I have sometimes had some serious, and I trust profitable thoughts, whilst speaking over the remains of some of the saints of God. The grave is not a pleasant place to look into; but when we view it in connection with the Lord Jesus, we feel there is mercy connected with our death and burial, and our rest in our dusty beds. As surely as the body of our Lord is in heaven, so surely will all the bodies of His people be raised from the dead. And what a wondrous sight will be seen at the last day, when every grave will be opened, and countless millions of ransomed beings will lift up their heads in the dust, and be drawn out of their graves; for their Lord is the resurrection and the life. He will communicate new life to the dust now sleeping in the grave, and by His almighty power raise every ransomed body, and form and fashion it like unto His own glorious body, when it shall be caught up to meet Himself in the air, and so shall it be for ever with the Lord. Beloved friends, we shall see and meet our friends again. The eyes of Job, which saw his three or four friends, shall see his descending Lord, for himself, and behold Him, and not another. Since death is inevitable, and we are certainly going to the grave, and must become dust again, oh how pleasing and sweet is the fact that the day is coming when death shall be swallowed up in victory! The blood of the Lamb demands our resurrection. It speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and among its other demands it requires the glorification of our bodies. I have sometimes made observations here and elsewhere in relation to the bodies of the saints, some of whom I have heard

speak as I have thought very improperly and un-scripturally concerning their bodies. If our souls, they have said, get to heaven, and enter into rest, we care not what becomes of our bodies. But your Lord cares for them, and has made himself responsible for their resurrection. He is to present your bodies at the last day, before the glory of God's presence. They are purchased property, they are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The body of Jesus was raised, and the bodies of His people cannot be allowed to remain in the tomb. A sweet pledge is the resurrection of Jesus, of the resurrection of His people.

Lastly, with regard to the resurrection of Christ—it is the pattern of the resurrection of His people. The minds of the saints are conformed in some measure to Jesus Christ in this world. He is holy; so are they. He is spiritual; so are they. He was filled with the Holy Ghost; and they possess a measure of the same Spirit. The life of Jesus is in every saint; and every saint is a Christian, because Christ is formed in him the hope of eternal glory. But our bodies, beloved friends, are to undergo a change similar, perhaps, to that which our minds passed through in regeneration. I have no authority for saying that the Holy Ghost will regenerate our bodies, but the resurrection of the body will, in some measure resemble the regeneration of the mind. Now the body is a burden to the mind. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We sometimes experience considerable difficulty in bringing our bodies up to the sanctuary, and when they are there they frequently burden our souls. There is drowsiness, and a want of liveliness and buoyancy which interfere with our spiritual worship and comfort. Soon our bodies will be spiritual, like the glorious body of the Lord Jesus, and when He has put if I may so speak, the last touch to His work by raising us from the grave, and making us completely like Himself,—what shall we be, and how shall we appear? Brethren, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when

He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Eternity will never, like time, cause infirmities and defects upon our parts and powers. Immortal youth and vigor, and strength, and buoyancy, and spirituality will characterize the persons of all the people of God. "This Jesus hath God raised up." And the fact that He did so proves the completeness of our redemption, supplies a pledge of our perfection, and is a pattern of our resurrection.

Let us notice in the second place, one or two facts in connection with the exaltation of Jesus. "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted," it was necessary that our Lord should be honored for His work, and His exaltation is the glorious reward of His sufferings. He entered heaven justly and righteously, having a right to do so, in consequence of His own personal worth and merit. We enter behind Him in His name, and in dependence on His worth and merit. He leaned and rested, and depended on Himself alone. He lifted up His head with confidence and joy when He reached the portals of eternal glory, and, conscious of His own worth and worthiness, He went up to the right hand of God. Divine justice seated Him on the throne of honor, and put upon His head the many crowns which now adorn His brow, for He is worthy to sit there; and worthy to receive all the ascriptions of praise and glory which are presented to Him. He is the only worthy one in that glorious world. Gabriel never speaks of worth or worthiness, and the saints that are glorified have no thought of personal worthiness; but our Lord is conscious of the fact that He is worthy to sit, and live, and reign over all, for ever and ever. He is rewarded for His work with a seat at the right hand of God.

*"His work for ever is complete,
For ever undisturbed His seat;
Myriads of angels round Him fly,*

And sing His well-gained victory."

*"They brought His chariot from above
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
'The glorious work is done"*

And who is it that sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high? The Lord that died for us? Flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. He is our Brother. If when we were in trouble we had a brother in a high place that could and would help us, what hope and confidence that fact would inspire us with. O friends, eternity is before us, and we have immortal minds to be saved from sin, and carried through all our trials and troubles here. Our Brother is on the throne, our Jesus is Lord of all; God has exalted Him at His own right hand, and He reigns over all. John saw a book in the hands of Him that sat on the throne, and heard a voice saying, "Who is worthy to take it, and to open the seals thereof! Of all that John saw, not one in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth could open the book. John wept, and one said to him, "Weep not; for the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof." And John looked, and saw a Lamb in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain, who took the book out of the hand of the Father. And what is He doing now? Why, the book of God's purposes is before this exalted Lord, who holds the reins of universal dominion in His hand, and

*"Here He exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown;
And there the following page He turns,
And treads the monarch down."*

As a minister preaches, this exalted One drops his grace into the hearts of sinners and saints, regenerating the former and edifying the latter, proving that he is Lord of all. Whilst all this is being done, there are hundreds of saints on their dying beds, not far from their home of glory; and He that sits on the throne attends to all their wants, and sees them safely through. Our exalted Lord is receiving those for whom He died, helping them on their way to the heavenly home, is present with them in their last moments, and meets them at the threshold of glory, to welcome them to their everlasting home and rest. He is exalted at the right hand of God. There is not a world, but what is His, nor a devil but what He controls, nor an event but what He influences. The circumstances of our life He connects together in a way that is worthy of Himself. That which is casual, and called an accident, He controls and manages.

*“My life’s minutest circumstance
Is governed by His eye.”*

He that is your Lord was the “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” It is divinely right that He should sit on that high throne, and manage all the affairs of the universe. But that is not all. He is the object of eternal worship. He that is exalted above all blessing and praise represents Deity, and is Himself the eternal God. How great is the mystery of godliness! We do not expect to see three divided persons in heaven, certainly not as painters represent the Trinity—the Bather as an old man, the Son as a young man, and the Holy Ghost as a dove. Oh how prone people are to canalize eternal things, and even Jehovah and His character.

*“The God shines gracious through the man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all.”*

The Lamb of God embodies Deity, and all the perfections and attributes of Jehovah. Thus all the inhabitants of heaven fall before our exalted

Lord, and sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and power, and glory for ever." Amen.