

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SILVER SOCKETS: OR, REDEMPTION THE FOUNDATION.

A Sermon

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.”—Exodus xxx. 11—16.

“A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the vail; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket.”—Exodus xxxviii. 26—27.

WILL you kindly first open your Bibles at Exodus xxx.; for I must commence my discourse by expounding that passage. When the account was taken of the number of the children of Israel the Lord commanded that every male over twenty years of age should pay half a shekel as redemption money, confessing that he deserved to die, owing that he was in debt to God, and bringing the sum demanded as a type of a great redemption which would by-and-by be paid for the souls of the sons of men. The truth was thus taught that God's people are a redeemed people: they are elsewhere called “the redeemed of the Lord.” If men reject the redemption which he ordains, then are they not his people; for of all his chosen it may be said—“The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.” Whenever we attempt to number up the people of God it is absolutely needful that we count only those who at least profess to have brought the redemption price in their hands, and so to have taken part in the atonement of Christ Jesus. David, when he numbered the people, did not gather from them the redemption money, and hence a plague broke out amongst them. He had failed in obedience to the Lord's ordinance, and counted his subjects, not as redeemed people, but merely as so many heads. Let us always beware of estimating the number of Christians by the number of the population of the countries called Christian; for the only true Christians in the world are those who are redeemed

from iniquity by the blood of the Lamb, and have personally accepted the ransom which the Lord has provided, personally brought their redemption money in their hands by taking Christ to be theirs and presenting him by an act of faith to the great Father. God has upon earth as many people as believe in Jesus Christ, and we dare not count any others to be his but those who can say, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." We must not count heads which know about Christ, but hands which have received the redemption money and are presenting it unto God; not so much persons who are called Christians by courtesy as souls that are Christly in very fact, because they have accepted the atoning sacrifice, and live before God as "redeemed from among men."

Observe that this redemption, without which no man might rightly be numbered among the children of Israel lest a plague should break out among them, must be *personal and individual*. There was not a lump sum to be paid for the nation, or twelve amounts for the twelve tribes; but each man must bring his own half shekel for himself. So there is no redemption that will be of any use to any of you unless it is personally accepted and brought before God by faith. You must each one be able to say for yourself concerning the Lord Jesus, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." The doctrine of general redemption, which teaches men to say, "Oh, yes; we are all sinners, you know; Christ died for us, for he died for us all," lays a very poor foundation for comfort. We need not so much a general as a personal redemption, a redemption which actually redeems, and redeems us as individuals. The great sacrifice for the sin of man must become to us a personal atonement, for only so can we realise its efficacy. You must each one bring Christ unto the Father, taking him into your hands by simple faith. No other price must be there; but that price must be brought by every individual, or else there is no acceptable coming to God.

It was *absolutely essential* that each one should bring the half shekel of redemption money; for redemption is the only way in which you and I can be accepted of God. If birth could have done it, they had the privilege beyond all doubt; for they had Abraham to their father: they were lineally descended from the three great patriarchs, and they might have said, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." Nay, but salvation is not of blood, nor of birth, nor of the will of the flesh: salvation is by redemption, and even the true child of Abraham must bring his redemption money. So must you, you child of godly parents, find salvation by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, or be lost for ever. Do not believe the falsehood of certain modern divines, that you children of godly parents do not need to be converted because you are born so nobly and brought up so tenderly by your parents. You are by nature heirs of wrath even as others. "Ye must be born again," and ye must be personally redeemed as well as heathen children, or else you will perish, though the blood of ministers, martyrs, and apostles should be running in your veins. Redemption is the only ground of acceptance before God, and not godly birth, or pious education.

There were many, no doubt, in the camp of Israel who were men of station and substance; but *they* must bring the ransom money, or die amid their wealth. Others were wise-hearted and skilful in the arts, yet

must they be redeemed or die. Rank could not save the princes, nor office spare the elders : every man of Israel must be redeemed ; and no man could pass the muster-roll without his half shekel, whatever he might say, or do, or be. God was their God because he had redeemed them out of the house of bondage, and they were his people because he had "put a redemption between his people and the Egyptians." Well did David ask, "What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself?"

Note well that every Israelitish man must be *alike redeemed*, and redeemed with the like, nay, with the same redemption. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel." Every man requires redemption, the one as well as the other. Kings on their thrones must be redeemed as well as prisoners in their dungeons ; the philosopher must be redeemed as well as the peasant ; the preacher as much as the profligate, and the moralist as certainly as the prostitute or the thief. The redemption money for every person must be the same, for all have sinned and are in like condemnation.

And it must be *a redemption that meets the divine demand*, because, you see, the Lord not only says that they must each bring half a shekel, no more, no less, but it must be "the shekel of the sanctuary,"—not the shekel of commerce, which might be debased in quality or diminished by wear and tear, but the coin must be according to the standard shekel laid up in the holy place. To make sure of it Moses defines exactly how much a shekel was worth, and what its weight was,—"*A shekel is twenty gerahs.*" So you must bring to God the redemption which he has appointed,—the blood and righteousness of Christ,—nothing more, nothing less. The ransom of Christ is perfection, and from it there must be no varying. The price must satisfy the Divine demand, and that to the full.

Note that the price appointed did effectually redeem so far as the type could go. Some rejoice in a redemption which does not redeem ; for the general redemption by which all men are supposed to be redeemed leaves multitudes in bondage, and they go to hell despite this kind of redemption. Therefore do we preach a particular and special redemption of God's own chosen and believing people : these are effectually and really ransomed, and the precious price once paid for them has set them free, neither shall any plague of vengeance smite them, for the redemption money has procured them eternal deliverance.

This type is full of instruction : the more it is studied the richer will it appear. Every man that is numbered among the children of Israel, and permitted to serve God by going out to war, or to take upon him the duties of citizenship, must, as he is numbered, be redeemed. So must every one of us, if we are truly God's people and God's servants, find our right to be so in the fact of our redemption by Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the joy and glory of each one of us : "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

Now we turn to the second of our texts, and there we learn a very remarkable fact. In the thirty-eighth chapter, verse twenty-five, we find that this mass of silver which was paid, whereby six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men were redeemed, each one paying his half shekel, came to a great weight of silver. It must have weighed

something over four tons, and this was dedicated to the use of the tabernacle: the special application of the precious metal was to make sockets into which the boards which made the walls of the tabernacle should be placed. The mass of silver made up one hundred talents, and these upheld the fifty boards of the holy place. They were in a wilderness, constantly moving, and continually shifting the tabernacle. Now, they might have dug out a foundation in the sand, or on coming to a piece of rock where they could not dig, they might have cut out foundations with great toil; but the Lord appointed that they should carry the foundation of the tabernacle with them. A talent of silver, weighing, I suppose, close upon one hundred pounds, was either formed into the shape of a wedge, so as to be driven into the soil, or else made into a solid square plate to lie upon it. In the wedge or plate were made mortises, into which the tenons of the boards could be readily fitted. These plates of silver fitted the one into the other, tenon and mortise wise, and thus they made a compact parallelogram, strengthened at the corners with double plates, and formed one foundation, moveable when taken to pieces, yet very secure as a whole. *This foundation was made of the redemption money.* See the instructive emblem! The foundation of the worship of Israel was redemption. The dwelling-place of the Lord their God was founded on atonement. All the boards of incorruptible wood and precious gold stood upon the redemption price, and the curtains of fine linen, and the veil of matchless workmanship, and the whole structure rested on nothing else but the solid mass of silver which had been paid as the redemption money of the people. There was only one exception, and that was at the door where was the entrance to the holy place. There the pillars were set upon sockets of brass, perhaps because, as there was much going in and out of the priests, it was not meet that they should tread upon the token of redemption. The blood of the paschal Lamb, when Israel came out of Egypt, was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts; but out of reverence to that blood it was not to be sprinkled on the threshold. Everything was done to show that atonement is to be the precious foundation of all holy things, and everything to prevent a slighting or disregard of it. Woe unto that man of whom it shall ever be said, "He hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing."

I do not for a moment bring before you the type of the text as a proof of doctrine; but I intend to use it simply as an illustration. It seems to me to be a very striking, full, and suggestive emblem, setting forth most clearly certain precious truths. I feel I am quite safe in using this illustration, because it is one among a group of acknowledged types, and could not have been given without a reason. I do not see why they could not have made the foundation sockets of iron, or why they could not have been content with tent pins and cords as in other cases of tent building: I see no reason in the necessity of the case why they must be sockets of silver; there must have been another reason. Why was that particular silver prescribed? Why must the redemption money be used, and nothing else? Surely there is teaching here if we will but see it.

Moreover, this does not stand alone; for when the Tabernacle was succeeded by the Temple redemption was still conspicuous in the foundation. What was the foundation of the Temple? It was the rock of Mount Moriah. And what was the hill of Moriah but the place where in many lights redemption and atonement had been set forth. It was there that Abraham drew the knife to slay Isaac: a fair picture of the Father offering up his Son. It was there the ram was caught in the thicket and was killed instead of Isaac: fit emblem of the Substitute accepted instead of man. Later still, it was on Mount Moriah that the angel, when David attempted to number the people without redemption money, stood with his sword drawn. There David offered sacrifices and burnt offerings. The offering was accepted and the angel sheathed his sword—another picture of that power of redemption by which mercy rejoices against judgment. And there the Lord uttered the memorable sentence, "It is enough, stay now thine hand." This "enough" is the crown of redemption. Even as the Great Sacrifice himself said, "It is finished," so does the Great Acceptor of the sacrifice say, "enough." What a place of redemption was the hill of Zion! Now, if the temple was built on a mount which must have been specially selected because there the types of redemption were most plentiful, I feel that without an apology I may boldly take this first fact that the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness was based and grounded upon redemption money, and use it for our instruction. With this much of preface we will now fall to and feed upon the spiritual meal which is set before us. O for grace to feast upon the heavenly bread that we may grow thereby. Spirit of the living God, be pleased to help us in this matter.

I. First, I want you to view this illustration as teaching us something about GOD IN RELATION TO MAN. The tent in the wilderness was typical of God's coming down to man to hold intercourse with him: the fiery cloudy pillar visible outside, and the bright light of the shekinah, visible to him who was called to enter once a year into the innermost sanctuary, shining over the mercy-seat,—these were the tokens of the special presence of the Deity in the centre of the camp of Israel. The Lord seems to teach us, in relation to his dealing with men, that *he will meet man in the way of grace only on the footing of redemption*. He treats with man concerning love and grace within his holy shrine; but the basis of that shrine must be atonement. Rest assured, dear friends, that there is no meeting with God on our part except through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. I am of Luther's mind when he said, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." God out of Christ is a terror to us. Even in Christ, remember, he is a consuming fire, for even "our God is a consuming fire"; but what he must be out of Christ may none of us ever know.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."

You must not attempt to have audience with God at first upon the footing of election. It were presumptuous to attempt to come to the electing Father except through the atoning Son. "No man," saith Christ, "cometh to the Father but my me." Never attempt to speak with God on the footing of your own sanctification; for very soon you will come to bringing your legal righteousness before him, and that will provoke him. Always enter the holy place with the thought, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "Not without blood": recollect that! Into the holy place went the high priest once every year, "not without blood." There can be no coming of God to man on terms of peace except through the one great sacrifice: that must be the foundation of it all.

Nay, and not only God's coming to us, but *God's abiding with us is upon the same foundation*; for the tabernacle was, so to speak, the house of God,—the place where God especially dwelt among his people, as he said: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." But he never dwelt among them in anything but in a tent that was based upon the silver of the redemption money; and you, dear friend, if you have ever walked with God, can only maintain your fellowship by resting where you did at first, as a poor sinner redeemed by your Saviour. They have asked me to rise sometimes to a higher platform, and come to God as a sanctified person. Yes, but a rock, though it may be lower than the little wooden stage which some erect upon it, is safer to stand upon; and I do believe that those who walk with God, according to their attainments, and imaginary perfections, have climbed up to a rotten stage, which will fall under them ere long. I know no mode of standing before God to day but that which I had at first. I am unworthy still in myself, but accepted in the Beloved! Guilty in myself, and lost and ruined; but still received, blessed, and loved, because of the person and work of Christ. The Lord cannot dwell with you, my dear friend, you will soon have broken fellowship and be in the dark, if you attempt to walk with him because you feel sanctified, or because you have been active in his service, or because you know much, or because you are an experienced believer. No! no! no! The Lord will only abide with us in that tabernacle whose every board is resting upon the silver foundation of redemption by his own dear Son.

There can, beloved, be no sort of *communion* between God and us except through the atonement. Do you want to pray? You cannot speak with God except through Jesus Christ. Do you wish to praise? You cannot bring the censer full of smoking incense except through Christ. It is only within those foundations of silver that you can speak to God, or hear him speak comfortably with you. Would you hear a voice out of the excellent glory? Do you pray that the great Father would speak with you as with his dear children? Expect it through Jesus Christ, for "through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Even unto the Father, though we be children, we have not access except through Jesus. The tabernacle of communion even to him that lives nearest to God must be built upon the redemption price. Free grace and dying love must be the golden bells which ring upon our garments when we go into the holy place to speak with the Most High.

The tabernacle was the place of *holy service*, where the priests all day long offered sacrifices of one kind and another unto the Most High.

And you and I serve God as priests, for he has made us a royal priesthood. But how and where can we exercise our priesthood? Everywhere as to this world; but before God, the foundation of the temple wherein we stand, and the ground of the acceptance of our priesthood, is redemption. The priests offered their sacrifice not in groves of man's planting, or on high hills, which were the natural strength of the land, but within the space marked out by the silver slabs of atonement money; and so must we worship and serve within redemption lines. If we come under the idea of legal merit, and suppose that there is a natural goodness in our prayers, or in our praises, in our observances of Christian ceremonies, or in almsgiving, or in zealous testimony, we make a great mistake, and we shall never be so accepted. We must bring our offerings unto that court which is fenced about by the foundation most precious which God has laid of old, even the merit of his dear Son. We are accepted in the Beloved, and in no other manner; we are shut in within the foundation which Christ has laid of old, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood.

Thus much, dear brethren, upon one view of this subject. May you learn much of God in his relation to man while you meditate thereon at your leisure and are taught of the Holy Ghost.

II. I think we may, in the second place, apply this illustration to CHRIST IN HIS DIVINE PERSON. The Tabernacle was the type of our Lord Jesus Christ, for God dwells among men in Christ. "He tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory," says the apostle. God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building; but the Temple of God is Christ Jesus, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Our Lord is thus the Tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched and not man; and *our first and fundamental idea of him must be in his character as Redeemer*. Our Lord does come to us in other characters, and in them all he is right glorious; but unless we receive him as Redeemer we have missed the essence of his character, the foundation idea of him. As the tent in the wilderness was founded upon the redemption money, so our idea and conception of Christ must be first of all that "he is the propitiation for our sins;" and I say this, though it may seem unnecessary to say it, because Satan is very crafty, and he leads many from plain truth by subtle means. I remember a sister, who had been a member of a certain denomination, who was converted to God in this place, though she had been a professed Christian for years. She said to me "I have hitherto believed only in Christ crucified: I worshipped him as about to come in the second Advent to reign with his people, but I never had a sense of guilt, neither did I go to him as putting away my sin; and hence I was not saved." When she began to see herself as a sinner she found her need of a Redeemer. Atonement must enter into our first and chief idea of the Lord Jesus. "We preach Christ *crucified*": we preach him glorified, and delight to do so; but still the main point upon which the eye of a sinner must rest, if he would have peace with God, must be Christ crucified for sin. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Do, then, my dear hearer, let the very foundation of your faith in Christ be your view of him as ransoming you from the power of sin and Satan. Some say they admire

Christ as an example, and well they may; they can never find a better: but Jesus Christ will never be truly known and followed if he be viewed only as an example, for he is infinitely more than that. Neither can any man carry out the project of being like Christ, unless he first knows him as making atonement for sin, and as giving power to overcome sin through his blood. Some writers have looked upon Christ from one point of view and some from another, and there is no book that is more likely to sell than a Life of Christ, but the most essential view of him is to be had from the cross foot. No complete life of Christ has been written yet. All the lives of Christ that have yet been written amount to about one drop of broth, while the four Evangelists are as a whole bullock. The pen of inspiration has accomplished what all the quills in the world will never be able to do again, and there is no need they should. However much we dwell upon the holiness of our Lord, we cannot complete his picture unless we describe him as the sinner's ransom. He is white, but he is ruddy too. Rutherford said, "O then, come and see if he be not a red man. In his suffering for us he was wet with his own blood. Is he not well worthy of your love?" When he cometh forth in the vesture dipped in blood many shun him, they cannot bear the atoning sacrifice; but he is never in our eyes so matchlessly lovely as when we see him bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and putting away transgression by making himself the Substitute for his people.

Let this then be your basis idea of Christ—"he has redeemed us from the curse of the law." Indeed, in reference to Christ, we must regard his redemption as the basis of his triumphs and his glory—"the sufferings of Christ and the glory that shall follow." We cannot understand any work that he has performed unless we understand his vicarious sacrifice. Christ is a lock without a key, he is a labyrinth without a clue, until you know him as the Redeemer. You have spilt the letters on the floor, and you cannot make out the character of the Wonderful till first you have learned to spell the words—atonement by blood. This is the deepest joy of earth and the grandest song in heaven. "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

I beg you to observe, in connection with our text, that as the foundation of the Tabernacle was very valuable, so our Lord Jesus as our Redeemer is *exceedingly precious to us*. His redemption is made with his precious blood. The redemption money was of pure and precious metal, a metal that does not lose weight in the fire. "The redemption of the soul is precious." What a redemption price hath Christ given for us; yea, what a redemption price he is! Well did Peter say, "Unto you that believe he is precious": silver and gold are not to be mentioned in comparison with him. To me it is very instructive that the Israelites should have been redeemed with silver in the form of half-shekels, because there are many who say, "These old-fashioned divines believe in the mercantile idea of the atonement." Exactly so: we always did and always shall use a metaphor which is so expressive as to be abhorred by the enemies of the truth. The mercantile idea of the atonement is the Biblical idea of the atonement. These people were redeemed, not with lumps of uncoined silver, but with money used in commerce. Paul saith "Ye are not your own: ye are bought"—listen—"with a price"—to give us the mercantile

idea beyond all question. "Bought with a price" is doubly mercantile. What say you to this, ye wise refiners, who would refine the meaning out of the word of the Lord? Such persons merely use this expression about the "mercantile idea" as a cheap piece of mockery, because in their hearts they hate atonement altogether, and the idea of substitution and expiation by vicarious sacrifice is abhorrent to them. Therefore hath the Lord made it so plain, so manifest that they may stumble at this stumbling-stone, "whereunto also," methinks, as Peter saith, "they were appointed." To us, at any rate, the redemption price which is the foundation of all is exceedingly precious.

But there is one other thing to recollect in reference to Christ, namely, that *we must each one view him as our own*, for out of all the grown up males that were in the camp of Israel, when they set up the tabernacle, there was not one but had a share in its foundation. We read in Exodus xxxv. 25 and 26, "And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair." The men could not spin, perhaps; they did not understand that art; but every man had his half a shekel in the foundation. I want you to think of that. Each believer has a share in Christ as his redemption: nay, I dare not say a share in him, for he is all mine, and he is all yours. Brother and sister, have you by faith laid hold upon a whole Christ and said, "He has paid the price for me"? Then you have an interest in the very fundamental idea of Christ. Perhaps you are not learned enough to have enjoyed your portion in certain other aspects of our Lord; but if you are a believer, however weak you are, though you are like the poor among the people of Israel, you have your half shekel in the foundation. I delight to think of that. I have my treasure in Christ; "my Beloved is mine." Do you say he is yours? I do not deny it. So he is, but "he is mine." If you deny that fact we will quarrel at once, for I do aver that "my Beloved is mine." Moreover, by his purchase "I am his." "So am I," say you. Quite right: I am glad you are; but I know that "I am his." There is nothing like getting a firm, personal hold and grip of Christ: my half shekel is in the basis of the tabernacle; my redemption money is in the divinely glorious building of grace; my redemption is in the death of Christ, which is the foundation of all.

III. Time fails me, and yet I have now a third thought to lay before you very briefly. The tabernacle was a type of THE CHURCH OF GOD as the place of divine indwelling. What and where is the church of God? The true church is founded upon redemption. Every board of shittim wood was tenoned and mortised into the sockets of silver made of the redemption money, and every man that is in the church of God is united to Christ, rests upon Christ, and cannot be separated from him. If that is not true of you, my dear hearer, you are not in the church of God. You may be in the church of England or of Rome, you may be in this church or some other; but unless you are joined to Christ, and he is the sole foundation upon which you rest, you are not in the church of God. You may be in no visible church whatever, and yet, if you are resting upon Christ, you are a part of the true house of God on earth.

Christ is a sure foundation for the church; for the tabernacle was

never blown down. It had no foundation but the talents of silver; and yet it braved every desert storm. The wilderness is a place of rough winds—it is called a howling wilderness; but the sockets of silver held the boards upright, and the holy tent defied the rage of the elements. To be united to Christ by faith is to be built on a sure foundation. His church will never be overthrown let the devil send what hurricanes he may.

And it was *an invariable foundation*, for the tabernacle always had the same basis wherever it was placed. One day it was pitched on the sand, another on a good piece of arable ground, a third time on a grass plot, and to-morrow on a bare rock; but it always had the same foundation. The bearers of the holy furniture never left the silver sockets behind. Those four tons of silver were carried in their waggons, and put out first as the one and only foundation of the holy place. Now, the learned tell us that the nineteenth century requires “advanced thought.” I wish the nineteenth century was over; I have heard it bragged about so much that I am sick of the nineteenth century. We are told that this is too sensible a century to need or accept the same gospel as the first, second, and third centuries. Yet these were the centuries of martyrs, the centuries of heroes, the centuries that conquered all the gods of Greece and Rome, the centuries of holy glory, and all this because they were the centuries of the gospel; but now we are so enlightened that our ears ache for something fresh, and under the influence of another gospel, which is not another, our beliefs are dwindling down from alps to anthills, and we ourselves from giants to pigmies. You will want a microscope soon to see Christian faith in the land, it is getting to be so small and scarce. By God’s grace some of us abide by the ark of the covenant, and mean to preach the same gospel which the saints received at the first. We shall imitate those who, having had a silver foundation at the first, had a silver foundation for the tabernacle, even till they came to the promised land. It is a foundation that we dare not change. It must be the same, world without end, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

IV. Fourthly, and lastly, I think this tabernacle in the wilderness may be viewed as a type of THE GOSPEL, for the gospel is the revelation of God to man. The tent in the wilderness was the gospel according to Moses. Now, as that old gospel in the wilderness was, such must ours be, and I want to say just two or three things very plainly, and have done.

Redemption, atonement in the mercantile idea, must be *the foundation of our theology—doctrinal, practical, and experimental*. As to doctrine, they say a fish stinks first at the head, and men first go astray in their brains. When once there is anything wrong in your belief as to redemption you are wrong all through. I believe in the old rhyme—

“What think you of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme,
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of HIM.”

If you get wrong on atonement you have turned a switch which will run the whole train of your thoughts upon the wrong line. You must know Christ as the Redeemer of his people, and their substitute, or your

teaching will give an uncertain sound. As redemption must be the foundation of doctrinal divinity, so it must of practical divinity. "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price," must be the source of holiness, and the reason for consecration. The man that does not feel himself to be specially "redeemed from among men" will see no reason for being different from other men. "Christ loved his Church and gave himself *for it*;" he who sees no special giving of Christ for his Church will see no special reason why the Church should give herself to Christ.

Certainly redemption must be the foundation of experimental theology; for what is an experience worth that does not make us every day prize more and more the redeeming blood? Oh, my dear friends, I never knew, though I had some idea of it, what a fool I was till of late years. I tell you that those dreadful pains, which may even make you long for death, will empty you right out, and not only empty you, but make you judge yourself to be a hollow sham, and cause you to loathe yourself, and then it is that you cling to Christ. Nothing but the atoning sacrifice will satisfy me. I have read plenty of books of modern theology, but none of them can heal so much as a pin's prick in the conscience. When a man gets sick in body and heavy in spirit he wants the old-fashioned puritanical theology, the gospel of Calvin, the gospel of Augustine, the gospel of Paul, the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our theology as a matter of experience must be based upon redemption.

Ah, brethren, and not only our theology but *our personal hope*. The only gospel that I have to preach is that which I rest upon myself:—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," "For the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed": "He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Oh, dear hearers, build on that and you will never fail; but if you do not take Christ's redemption as the foundation of your hope—I do not care who you are—you may be very learned, but you know nothing at all. The Lord make you to know that you know nothing, and then you will know something: and when you have learned as much as that, may he teach you the redemption of his Son, and reveal Christ in you.

This, beloved, is henceforth *the burden of our service, and the glory of our life*. Those silver sockets were very precious, but very weighty. I dare say the men who had to move them sometimes thought so. Four tons and more of silver make up a great load. O blessed, blissful draught, to have to put the shoulder to the collar to draw the burden of the Lord—the glorious weight of redemption. My soul, blessed art thou to be made a labouring ox for Christ; ever to be bearing among this people the divinely precious load of the foundation which Christ has laid for his people. You, young brethren, that preach, mind you always carry your four tons of silver: preach a full and rich redemption all of you. You who go to the Sunday School, do not let the children have a place to live in that has no foundation: the first wind will blow it over, and where will they be? Left naked under the ruins of that in which they had hoped. Lay Christ for a foundation. You cannot do better, for God himself has said, "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious." Lay this silver foundation wherever you are.

Aye, but though the ingots were heavy to carry, every Israelite felt

proud to think that that tabernacle had a foundation of silver. You Amalekites out there cannot see the silver footing of it all ; you Moabites cannot perceive it. All you can see is the badger skins outside,—the rough exterior of the tent. You say, “That tent is a poor place to be a temple : that gospel is a very simple affair.” No doubt it is to you, but you never saw the silver sockets, you never saw the golden boards, you never saw the glory of the inside of the place lit up by the seven-branched candlesticks, and glorious with the presence of God. Brethren, redemption is our honour and delight.

“ In the cross of Christ I glory
 Towering o'er the wrecks of time :
 All the light of sacred story
 Gathers round its head sublime.”

This the first and this the last ; the bleeding Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, and yet living and reigning when earth's foundations shall dissolve. That blessed Lamb of God is in the midst of the throne, and his people shall all be with him, for ever triumphant. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the foundation and the headstone. O Saviour of sinners, glory be to thy name. Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter ii., 1—10 ;
 Exodus xxvi. 15—25 ; xxx. 11—16 ; xxxviii. 25—28.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84, 440, 549.
