

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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JESUS, THE DELIGHT OF HEAVEN.

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## A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."—Revelation v. 9, 10.

If you want to know a man's character, it is well to inquire at his home. What do his children and servants think of him? What is the estimate formed by those who are always with him? George Whitefield was once asked his opinion of a person, and his answer was very wise, for he replied, "I never lived with him." Beloved brethren in Christ, see what an estimate is formed of your Lord at home up yonder, where they know him best, and see him most constantly, and in the clearest light. They have discovered no faults in him. The angels who have beheld him ever since they were created, the redeemed who have been with him, some of them for thousands of years, have found no spot in him; but their unanimous verdict expressed freely in joyful song is, "Thou art worthy; thou art worthy; thou art worthy."

If you desire to know a man it will be well to find out what the best sort of people think of him, for the good opinion of bad men is worthless. "What have I done," said one of the Greek philosophers, "that you speak well of me?" when he found himself applauded by a man of evil character. A character that comes from men fitted to judge, who know what purity is, who have had their eyes opened to discriminate between virtue and its counterfeit—such a character is well worth having. One would not like to be thought ill of by a saint. We value the esteem of those whose judgment is sound, who are free from prejudice, and who love only that which is honest and of good repute. Now, beloved, see what your Lord is thought of in the best society, where they are all perfect, where they are no longer children, but are all able to judge, where they live in a clear light, and are

free from prejudice. where they cannot make a mistake. See what they think of him. They themselves are without fault before the throne; but they do not think themselves worthy, they ascribe worthiness to Jesus only. None stood up to take the book from the open hand of the great King; but when they saw the Lamb do so they felt that it was his right to take that prominent and honourable position, and with one accord they said, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain." You and I cannot have too lofty thoughts of Jesus. We err in not thinking enough of him. Let our estimate of him grow, and let us cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" Oh, for great thoughts of Jesus. Oh, to set him on the highest imaginable throne in the conceptions of our soul, and to make every power and faculty of our manhood fall prostrate like the elders before him, while whatever of honour God may put upon us we cast always at his feet, and ever say, with heart and lip and act, "Thou art worthy, Jesus, Emmanuel, Redeemer, who hast purchased us by thy blood. Worthy art thou, worthy for ever and for ever."

It is to the estimate of the perfect spirits that I would call your attention. What think ye of Christ, ye glorified ones with whom we shall so soon unite? We have your answer in the words we have read. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

I. Notice first that the bright ones before the throne adore the Lord Jesus as WORTHY OF THE HIGH OFFICE OF MEDIATOR. They adore him as alone worthy of that office, for there was silence in heaven when the roll was held in God's hand, and the challenge was given, "Who is worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof?" Dumb were the four living creatures; silent were the cherubim and seraphim: in mute solemnity sat the four-and-twenty elders on their thrones. They put in no claim for worthiness, but by their silence, and their subsequent song when Christ came forward, they admitted that he alone could unfold the purposes of God, and interpret them to the sons of men. For I take it that one of the meanings of our Lord's taking the book into his hand was this: that he was *the fulfiller* of that mysterious roll so closely sealed. He was come to unfold it, and by transactions in which he should hold the chief place, it was to be fulfilled. The key of the purposes of God is Christ. We do not know what the decrees of God may be until they are fulfilled; but we do know that of him and through him, and to him, are all things, and that everything will begin and end with Jesus, for he is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the initial letter of all history, and he will be the "finis" of it when he shall give up the throne to God even the Father, that God may be all in all. As our Lord Jesus is the fulfiller, so he is *the interpreter*. He has been with the Father, and "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him." He is the great interpreter to us of the mind of God. His Spirit dwelling in us takes of his things and shows them unto us, and in the light of the Spirit we see the

glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. "No man cometh to the Father," saith he, "but by me;" for no man can expound the Father to us or conduct us to the Father save Jesus Christ, the sole interpreter of the divine secret. And so I regard the expressions here as setting him forth as mediator, for he it is who stands between God and man. He is worthy to take the book in his hand on our behalf, and grasp for us the indentures of our inheritance beyond the stars. No one else can go in for us to the august presence of the Most High, and take the title-deeds of grace into his hand on our behalf; but Christ can do it, and taking it he can unfold it and expound to us the wondrous purpose of electing love towards the chosen ones. Stand back, ye sons of anti-Christ, with your brazen foreheads! How dare ye bring forward a virgin, blessed among women, and cause her very name to be defiled by styling her our intercessor before God? How dare ye bring your saints and saintesses and make these to mediate between God and men? "There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." The saints in heaven sing of him, "Thou art worthy"; but they salute none else beside. They reserve no homage for any other intercessor or mediator or interpreter or fulfiller of the divine grace, for they know of no other. Unto him they give, and to him alone, the honour to go in unto the King on the behalf of the sons of men, and to take the book in his hand.

Notice carefully to what they ascribe this worthiness:—"Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, *for thou wast slain.*" Now, the case stands thus. God has given to us innumerable blessings in the covenant of grace, but they are given upon a condition. There are two sides to a covenant. Jesus Christ is our representative and covenant-head, and the condition which as the mediator he had to fulfil was this—that in due time he would offer to divine justice an honourable amend for all the injury done to the honour of God by our sins. As mediator, our Lord's worthiness did not merely arise from his person as God and perfect man: this fitted him to undertake the office, but his right to claim the privileges written in the Magna Charta which God held in his hand, his right to take possession for his people of that seven-sealed indenture lies in this, that he has fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and hence they sing, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." Not "Thou art worthy, for thou wast born on earth, and thou didst live a holy life," but "Thou wast slain;" for he must render recompense to incensed justice and injured holiness, and that he did upon the bloody tree. Whenever we begin to talk about this, the believers in the modern atonement—which is no atonement, but a hazy piece of cloudland—say to us, "Oh, you hold the commercial theory, do you?" They know right well that we only use, because the Bible uses them, commercial expressions as metaphors; but I venture to say to them, "You may well assert that there is nothing commercial about your system, for the commercial value of a counterfeit farthing would be too much to pay for the atonement in which *you* believe." I believe in an atonement in which Christ literally took the sin of his people, and for them endured the wrath of God, giving to justice *quid pro quo* for all that was due to it, or an equivalent for it: bearing, that we might not bear, the wrath that was due to us.

Jesus himself really "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" there was a literal, positive, actual substitution of "the just for the unjust to bring us to God." No other atonement is worth the breath used in preaching of it. It will neither give comfort to the conscience nor glory to God. But on this rock our souls may rest without fear, and it is because of this that they sing in heaven, "Thou art worthy, *for thou wast slain*. Thou canst claim our absolution: thou canst take the Magna Charta of thine elect into thy hand, and unroll the covenant established with them of old. Thou canst reveal to us the sure mercies of David, for thy part in the covenant has been fulfilled; thy substitutionary death has made thy people heirs with thee." Fain would I fly yonder to join their song, but till then I'll lisp it forth as best I may,—"*Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain.*"

II. Secondly, in heaven they adore the Lord as their REDEEMER. "*Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*"

The metaphor of redemption, if I understand it, signifies this. A thing which is redeemed in the strict sense belonged beforehand to the person who redeemed it. Under the Jewish law lands were mortgaged as they are now; and when the money lent upon them, or the service due for them, was paid, the land was said to be redeemed. An inheritance first belonged to a person, and then went away from him by stress of poverty, but if a certain price was paid it came back. Now "all souls are mine" saith the Lord, and the souls of men belong to God. The metaphor is used, and, mark, these expressions are but metaphors; but the sense under them is no metaphor; it is fact. Our souls had come under mortgage, as it were, through the sin committed, so that God could not accept us without violating his justice until something had been done by which he who is infinitely just could freely distribute his grace to us. Now, Jesus Christ has taken the mortgage from God's inheritance. "The Lord's portion is his people;" that portion was hampered till Jesus set it free. We were God's always, but we had fallen into slavery to sin. Jesus came to make recompense for our offences, and thus we return to where we were before, only with additional gifts which his grace bestows. In heaven they say "thou hast redeemed us;" and they tell the price, "*thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*" There lay the price, the sufferings and death of Jesus have set his people free from the slavery into which they were brought. They are redeemed, and they are redeemed *unto God*. That is the point: they come back to God as lands come back to the owner when the mortgage is discharged. We come back to God again, to whom we always and ever did belong, because Jesus has redeemed us unto God by his blood.

And please to notice that the redemption they sing about in heaven is not general redemption. It is particular redemption. "Thou hast redeemed *us* to God by thy blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They do not speak of the redemption of every tongue, and people, and nation, but of a redemption *out of* every tongue, and people, and nation. I thank God I do not believe that I was redeemed in the same way that Judas was, and no more. If so,



I shall go to hell as Judas did. General redemption is not worth anything to anybody, for of itself it secures to no one a place in heaven : but the special redemption which does redeem, and redeems men *out of* the rest of mankind, is the redemption that is to be prayed for, and for which we shall praise God for ever and ever. We are redeemed from among men. "Christ loved his church and gave himself for it." "He is the Saviour of all men"—let us never deny that—"but specially of them that believe." There is a wide, far-reaching sacrificial atonement which brings untold blessings to all mankind, but by that atonement a special divine object was aimed at, which will be carried out, and that object is the actual redemption of his own elect from the bondage of their sins, the price being the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, brethren, may we have a share in this particular, efficient redemption, for this alone can bring us where they sing the new song.

This redemption is one which is personally realised. Thou hast redeemed *us* to God. Redemption is sweet, but "thou hast redeemed *us*" is sweeter still. If I can but believe he loved me, and gave himself for me, that will tune my tongue to sing Jehovah's praise, for what said David? "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness." He repeated that several times over, but it would never have been carried out unless he had said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy." In vain he called upon others, their tongues were dedicated to their pleasures ; but the redeemed of the Lord are a fit choir to magnify his name.

The pith of what I have to say is this : in heaven they praise Jesus Christ because he has redeemed them,—my dear hearer, has he ever redeemed you ? Oh, says one, I believe he has redeemed everybody. But of what avail is that ? Do not the great mass of mankind sink to perdition ? If you rest upon such a redemption you rest upon what will not save you. He redeemed his own elect ; or, in other words, he redeemed believers. "God so loved the world" is a text much cried up, but pray go on with it. How much did he love the world ? "That he gave his only begotten Son *that whosoever believeth in him* should not perish." There is the specialty of it—"Whosoever believeth in him ;" and if you do not believe in him neither have you part or lot in his redemption, you are slaves to sin and Satan, and so will you live and so will you die : but believing in the Lord Jesus you have the marks of being specially and effectually redeemed by him, and when you get to heaven this will be your song,—*"Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood out of every kindred, and people, and tongue."* Blessed be God for this. Some of all sorts are saved, some of all colours, ranks, nations, and ages are saved ; some of all conditions of education and morals, some of the poorest, and some of the richest are redeemed : so that when we all assemble in heaven, though we make a motley throng on earth, we shall constitute a united choir, having all our voices tuned to this one note, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

III. Thirdly, and briefly, in heaven they praise Christ, not merely as mediator and as redeemer, but as the DONOR OF THEIR DIGNITIES. They are kings and reign. We too are kings ; but as yet we are not known or recognised, and often we ourselves forget our high descent.

Up there they are crowned monarchs, but they say, "*Thou hast made us kings.*" They are priests too, as we are now, every one of us. When a fellow comes forward in all sorts of curious garments, and says he is a priest, the poorest child of God may say, "Stand away, and don't interfere with my office: I am a priest; I know not what you may be. You surely must be a priest of Baal, for the only mention of the word vestments in Scripture is in connection with the temple of Baal." The priesthood belongs to all the saints. They sometimes call you laity, but the Holy Ghost says of all the saints, "Ye are God's *cleros*"—ye are God's clergy. Every child of God is a clergyman or a clergywoman. There are no priestly distinctions known in Scripture. Away with them! Away with them for ever! The Prayer-book says, "Then shall the *priest* say." What a pity that word was ever left there. The very word "priest" has such a smell of the sulphur of Rome about it, that so long as it remains the Church of England will give forth an ill savour. Call yourself a priest, sir! I wonder men are not ashamed to take the title: when I recollect what priests have done in all ages—what priests connected with the church of Rome have done, I repeat what I have often said: I would sooner a man pointed at me in the street and called me a devil, than called me a priest; for bad as the devil has been, he has hardly been able to match the crimes, cruelties, and villainies which have been transacted under the cover of a special priesthood. From that may we be delivered: but the priesthood of God's saints, the priesthood of holiness, which offers prayer and praise unto God—this they have in heaven; but they say of it, "*Thou hast made us priests.*" What the saints are, and what they are to be, they ascribe to Jesus. They have no glory but what they received from him, and they know it, and are perpetually confessing it.

Let our hearts sing with the redeemed—"All for Jesus, for all is from Jesus! All for Jesus, for Jesus has given us all we have." Let us begin that music here.

IV. Once again. They in heaven adore the Saviour as DIVINE.

I am not straining the words of my text at all, but keeping the whole passage before me. If you read the two chapters you will find that while they sing to God, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour and glory and power," they sing to the Lamb, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom." The ascriptions which are given to the Creator are also offered to the Lamb, and he is represented as sitting on the same throne. Mark carefully that the adoration which they give to him he does not resent. When John fell down to worship one of the angels he received an earnest protest, "See thou do it not." Now, if the worship given to Christ had been wrong, the thrice holy Saviour would have exclaimed most earnestly, "See thou do it not"; but he intimates no objection to the worship, although it is freely rendered by all the intelligent beings before the throne. Depend upon it, my hearer, you never will go to heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God. They are all doing it there: you will have to come to it, and if you entertain the notion that he is a mere man, or that he is anything less than God, I am afraid you will have to begin at the beginning and learn what true

religion means. You have a poor foundation to rest upon. I could not trust my soul with a mere man, or believe in an atonement made by a mere man: I must see God himself putting his hand to so gigantic a work. I cannot imagine a mere man being thus praised as the Lamb is praised. Jesus is "God over all, blessed for ever." When we ever speak at all severely of Socinians and Unitarians you must not be surprised at it, because if we are right they are blasphemers, and if they are right we are idolators, and there is no choice between the two. We never could agree, and never shall while the world standeth. We preach Christ the Son of God as very God of very God, and if they reject him it is not for us to pretend that it makes no difference, when in fact it makes all the difference in the world. We would not wish them to say more than they believe to be true, and they must not expect us to say less than we believe to be true. If Jesus be God, they must believe it, and must worship him as such, or else they cannot participate in the salvation which he has provided. I love the deity of Christ! I preach his humanity with all my might, and I rejoice that he is the son of man; but oh, he must be the Son of God too, or there is no peace for me.

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

Now I have almost done, only this is the outcome of the subject. You see the opinion they have of Jesus in heaven. My dear friends, are you of the same mind with them? You will never go there till you are. There are no sects in heaven—no two parties. They hold the same views about Jesus there. Let me ask you then, are you of the same persuasion as the glorified saints? They praise Jesus *for what he has done*. It is very wonderful to my mind that when they are adoring the Saviour they seem to strike that one key: they praise him for what he has done, and they praise him for what he has done *for them*. They might have praised him for what he is, but in the text they do not. Now, this reason which has such sway in heaven is the very same which moves us here—"We love him because he first loved us," and as if to show that this kind of love is not an inferior love, the love of gratitude seems to be the very sum and substance of the love of heaven—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us." Can you praise him for redeeming you? Dear hearer, you have heard about Jesus hundreds of times. Has he saved *you*? You know there is a fountain filled with blood, which cleanses from all sin; has it cleansed you? You know he has woven a robe of righteousness which covers his people from head to foot: has he covered you with it? You will never praise him till that is the case, and you cannot go to heaven till you are ready for his praise. "Well, but I go to my place of worship." So you may; but that will not save you till

you get a personal hold on Christ for yourself. "My mother and father were godly people." I am glad they were: I hope they won't have an ungodly son. You must, however, have a personal religion—something done by Jesus Christ *for you*. Young woman over yonder, has Jesus Christ redeemed *you* from among the mass of the people; brought *you* out from your sins, and separated *you* to himself? Have you had the blood applied to your soul—the precious blood of sprinkling which speaks peace in the conscience? Time is flying, and you have been hearers month after month; will it always be so? Will you never cry unto God, "Lord, let me know thy redemption; let me have a share in the precious blood: let me be washed from my sins"? Recollect you must be able to praise him for what he has done *for you*, or else you are not of the opinion of those in heaven, and into heaven you cannot come.

It is clear from the song I have been reading that in heaven Christ is everybody and everything. Is Christ so with you? It is a solemn question to put to persons. Is Christ first and last and middle with you, top and bottom, foundation and pinnacle, all in all? He knows not Christ who does not know that Christ is all. Christ and company will never do. Christ is the sole Saviour, the sole trust, the one prophet, priest, and king to all who accept him. Is he everything to you? Ah, there are some who think they love Christ; they think they trust Christ; but if he were to come to their house he would have a seat at the far end of the table if they treated him as they treat him now. They give him part of the Sabbath-day: they were loafing about all the morning, they were only able to get here this evening, and even now they have not come to worship, but only out of curiosity. A chapter in the Bible—how long is it, young man, since you read one? Private prayer—ah, I must not go into that; it is such a sorry story that you would have to tell. If anybody said to you, "You are not a Christian," you would be offended. Well, I will say it, and you may be offended if you like, but remember you should be offended with yourself rather than with me. If you offend my Lord I am not at all afraid of your being offended with his servant, and therefore I tell you, if Christ be anything short of Lord and King in your soul, Christ and you are wide apart. He must be in the front rank, Lord High Admiral upon the sea, and Commander-in-Chief on the land. He is not going to be a petty officer, to come in at your odd times to be a lackey to you. You must take him to be Head, Lord, and Master. Is it so with you? If not, you differ from those in heaven, for he is all in all to them.

Once more. Can you join with the words of our text and say, "He is worthy, he is worthy"? I hope there are many here who if they for a moment heard that full burst of song, "He is worthy," would join it very heartily, and say, "Ay, he *is* worthy." I seemed to-night when I was praying as if I could hear them sing, "He is worthy," and I could hardly restrain myself from shouting, "Well sing ye so, ye spirits before the throne! He *is* worthy!" If we were to loose our silence for a moment, and break the decorum which we have observed through the sermon, and with one unanimous shout cry, "Yes, he is worthy," I think it would be a fit thing to do. Jesus is worthy



of my life, worthy of my love, worthy of everything I can say for him, worthy of a thousand times more than that, worthy of all the music and harps on earth, worthy of all the songs of all the sweetest singers, worthy of all the poetry of the best writers, worthy of all the adoration of every knee, worthy of all that every man has or can conceive, or can compass, worthy to be adored of all that are in the earth and under the earth, and in the sea, and in the heavens, and in the heaven of heavens. He is worthy. We say "worthy," because we cannot tell how worthy. I think these good singers in heaven desired to give to the Lamb his due, and then they paused, and said to themselves, "We cannot give him the praise he deserves, but we know that he is worthy. We cannot pretend to give him what he is worthy of, but we will say he is worthy." Yes he *is* worthy. If I had fifty thousand lives in this poor body, he is worthy that they should all be poured out one after another in martyrdom. One should be burned alive, and another should be broken on the wheel, and another should be starved by inches, and another should be dragged at the heels of a wild horse, and he would deserve them all. He is worthy, and if we had all the mines of India—silver and gold and gems, the rarest treasures of all the kings that ever lived, if we were to give it all up to him, and go barefoot, he is worthy. And if, after having done that, we were to abide day and night in perpetual work without rest, all for his sake, and if each one of us were multiplied into a million, and all of us laboured so, he is worthy. Worthy. I would make every drop of dew sparkle with his praise, and every leaf in the forest bear his name. I would make every dell and every mountain vocal with adoration, and teach the stars, and teach the angels above the stars, his praise.

"Oh for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise!"

Let time and space become one mouth for song, and all eternity sound forth that mighty word, "He is worthy." Do you feel that he is worthy? If you do not, you cannot be admitted where they sing that song, for if you could enter there you would be unhappy. Never hope to enter there until your soul can say, "I have rested in his blood, I am by it redeemed unto God, and the Redeemer is worthy; and I will bear witness of his worthiness till time shall be no more."

God bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation iv. v

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HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 416, 417.