

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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TRUE LEARNING.

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## A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 24TH, 1901,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*On Thursday Evening, May 20th, 1880.*

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“But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”—Ephesians iv. 20, 21.

THE first two words of our text call attention to the distinction which must always be drawn between true Christians and other people: “But ye.” The apostle had been writing concerning other Gentiles, and the evil lives they lived; so, to the believers at Ephesus, he said that they were not to walk as unbelievers ordinarily did. Thus we learn, at the very opening of our subject, that, if we are indeed Christians, there is a manifest distinction between us and the men of the world. I may be told that, of course, there was a great contrast between Christ's followers and the heathen who lived in the apostle's day; and some persons will, perhaps, say that we cannot expect that there should be the same difference now between Christian men and unbelievers. I reply that there may be a variation as to the outward form of that contrast; but, essentially, it must be quite as true and real.

Someone was asking, the other day, how it was that the church, nowadays, was not so separate from the world as it used to be; and one who heard the question suggested that, possibly, the world had grown better; but another more truly said that, probably, the church had grown worse. There are two ways of our coming together;—the world may rise to our proper height, or we may descend to the world's level. Well, now, I am quite certain that candour requires us to say that, in some respects, the condition of society is much better than it was. There are some of the grosser vices, which were common enough fifty years ago, which are now held in general reprobation. To a very considerable extent, Christianity has leavened society; men are not, as a rule, so coarsely vicious as they were in the days of our grandsires; yet, after making all the abatement I possibly can on that score, I cannot help feeling that the difference between the church and the world has been mainly changed by the church coming down from what it used to

be. I wish we were as liable to be called fanatics as the first Methodists were, simply because men judged us to be as earnest as they were; I should be glad if we were as worthy to be called Puritans as were the men of the days of Dr. John Owen and Oliver Cromwell. For my part, I think that, nowadays, we are not Puritanic enough, or precise enough; and, without any hesitation, we may make the assertion, which we are sure God's Word will support, that whatever improvements there may be in the world, there must always be a marked distinction between the children of God and the seed of the serpent. There can never be a time in which death and life will be exactly alike, nor a season in which darkness will be the same thing as light. We must still, to the end of the chapter, be either born of God, born from above, or else continue to lie under the power of Satan; we must either be dead in trespasses and sins or else be quickened by divine grace; we must either have passed from nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, or else we are still abiding in that darkness.

You must also recollect, my brethren, whoever you may be, that if there is no distinction between you and the world around you, you may be certain that you are of the world; for, in the children of God, there must always be some marks to distinguish them from the rest of mankind, so that we can contrast them with the ungodly, and address to them the words of our text, "But ye have not so learned Christ." There is a something in them which is not to be found in the best worldling, something which is not to be discovered in the most admirable carnal man; a something in their character which can be readily perceived, and which marks them as belonging to another and a higher race, the twice-born, the elect of God, eternally chosen by him, and therefore made to be choice ones through the effectual working of his grace. Note this fact at the very commencement of our meditation, that there is a clear distinction between Christians and all other people.

Further, it appears from the text that the great means of this distinction is our being made into disciples to be taught of God, for the apostle says, "But ye have not so learned Christ." So that it is something which we have learned that makes us different from the rest of mankind. In our spiritual life, the first essential is conversion. This great change is like the turning of the helm, which makes the boat head up in a new direction; but conversion is not everything. After the boat is turned, it has to be rowed, or else it will drift down the stream. If a man becomes Christ's disciple by conversion, he must remain Christ's disciple, throughout the rest of his life, by sitting at his Master's feet, and receiving instruction from him; for it is only as we are taught of God that we shall be able to keep up the high spiritual distinction between ourselves and the rest of mankind. We are under the tutorship of the Holy Spirit; he has taken us into his school; he has taught us something already, he is teaching us more now, and he will keep on teaching us more and more till we shall know even as we are known.

I want, at this time, as his divine power rests upon me, to try to speak a little, first, upon *our lesson*: "ye have not so learned

Christ;" secondly, I will say something upon *how we have not learned that lesson*: "ye have not so learned Christ;" and then, thirdly, I will endeavour to tell you *how we have learned it*. We have learned it in this fashion: "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus."

I. First, then, we are to think about THE CHRISTIAN'S LESSON: "Ye have not so learned Christ."

It is a very uncommon expression which the apostle here employs, for it is not usual to learn a person; yet Paul says, "Ye have not so learned Christ," by which he did not mean merely learning the doctrine of Christ. Many a man knows what Christ taught, and yet has not learned Christ. He has read the Bible, he may even have studied it after a fashion, and may know what orthodox doctrine is, so that he does not care to hear any other; he could stand up and tell you very correctly what the teachings of Jesus Christ are, yet he has not learned Christ. It is quite right that we should learn the teachings of Christ, and value every word that he has spoken; still, that is not the main lesson that the Christian has to learn.

Nor is it merely learning Christ's precepts; for we might learn them all, and yet not have learned the one lesson that is essential to our Christian life, which is, to learn Christ. Some men are very earnest, and rightly so, to learn all the ceremonies that Christ has taught us. There are not many of those ceremonies, and people make great mistakes concerning them, notwithstanding their earnest zeal to be correct; but, supposing a man should know all about believers' baptism and the Lord's supper, according to their Scriptural mode and meaning, still, that is not the lesson spoken of in the text. Neither doctrines, nor precepts, nor ordinances will suffice as the life-lesson of a Christian; it is the blessed person of our Lord that we must learn.

Paul also meant a great deal more than merely learning about Christ. I think the distinction will readily strike you. A man may know much about Christ, whose Son he is, what work he came to do, what he is still doing, and what he will yet do at his glorious appearing; he may know sufficient about Christ to be able to be a teacher of others, and to be reckoned a theologian; and yet, for all this, he may never have learned Christ. That is quite another thing. I know much about many people so far as their history can be known by a stranger to them, yet I do not know them; I have never spoken to them, I have never even seen them. There are many persons, I am sure, of whom you can truly say that you know everything that can be known about them; for their whole career is so well known, and you have been told so much concerning them; yet you do not know them; to use Paul's word, you have never "learned" them. Beware, then, of being satisfied with knowing about Christ, for the life-lesson of a Christian is to know him,—to learn him. What does this mean?

It means, first, that you and I must *know him as a personal Christ*. We must know him as being a real Saviour, actually existing, to whom we have come, with whom we have spoken, and who has also

spoken to us, and of whose existence we can have no manner of doubt, because we know him, and are known of him. It does not mean that he is so little known to us that we can just detect and discover him; but that we have so learned him that we know him,—know his heart, know his voice, know that secret of the Lord which only he can reveal, and which he tells to none but those who are truly his own. This is the very essence of true religion,—personally living with a personal Saviour, personally trusting a personal Redeemer, personally crying out to a personal Intercessor, and receiving personal answers from a Person who loves us, and who manifests himself to us as he does not unto the world. To many people, Christ is only a name to bow at, not a person to embrace. To some, Christ is merely the name by which they designate their religion, such as it is; but to us, beloved, I trust that he is much more than a name,—“a living, bright reality,” who abides with us, and in whom also we abide.

Next to this realization of his personality, and the entering into communion with him, learning Christ means *knowing his nature*. As long as we have known Christ, we have known that he is Divine; indeed, many of us knew that before we really and savingly knew him. Since we were little children, we never had any question about Jesus Christ being “very God of very God;” and if anybody had called us Socinians or Unitarians, we should have been deeply grieved, because we always held the doctrine of his Divinity; but, now, we know that he is God, for “his eternal power and Godhead” have been proved in our spirit; he has taken away from us a mass of sin which none but God could have removed; he has breathed peace into us, even the peace of God which passeth all understanding; he has helped us when we have been staggering under a burden too heavy for us to bear, and he has borne it for us as none but God could have done. Our Lord Jesus has not only revealed himself to us, but he has also made our true selves known to ourselves by that omniscient power which dwells in none but God, and we have said to him as emphatically as Thomas did when he put his finger into the print of the nails, “My Lord and my God.” I never care to read any arguments about the Deity of Christ; I should as soon think of reading a book which sought to prove the existence of my mother. This is a matter which I know for myself; I have tried it, and proved it, and felt its power.

As to the humanity of Christ, beloved friends, we always knew that he was human. I suppose that none of us ever had a doubt about that as a matter of head knowledge; but, now, we know him to be human because we have been with him. He has felt for us as none but a brother born for adversity could feel. He has looked at us, sometimes, in our griefs, with such an eye as no angel ever had; and only such a wondrous Person as the Son of Mary, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, would have given us such a look as we have received from him; and he has spoken home to our heart words of such matchless tenderness as only one who was akin to us, and who had been tempted in all points like as we are, could ever have invented, and uttered to us. Just as truly as we know

him to be God, we also know him to be man. It is not now to us a matter of doctrine alone; it is not a matter needing to be proved, we do not now desire even Scriptural proof, for we have seen him ourselves, we have spoken with him personally; and now we not only believe his Word, but our own heart has proved and tested beyond all question that he is Emmanuel,—God with us. I hope I have made plain the distinction between knowing doctrinally that Christ is God and man, and personally learning him in his combined nature.

The next part of the lesson we have to learn is, *to know Christ in his various offices*. Did they not tell us, in our first Sunday-school, that Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King? Yes, and from our childhood's days we believed that he was all that; but now, beloved, many of us know that he is a Prophet, for, as I have already observed, he has read our hearts, and he has told us things that none but a prophet of God could know; he has revealed the condition of our hearts to us, he has shown us our sins, he has discovered our needs, and he has also supplied those needs, and restored peace to us, and brought us to himself, and revealed to us the truth of God as we were able to bear it.

We have no question also concerning his priesthood. We always did believe in it, but now we have learned it in another fashion. Not long ago, some of us stood, covered with filth from head to foot, and we heard one sing,—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,  
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins:  
 And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
 Lose all their guilty stains;”—

and we came to that fountain, and were plunged beneath that flood, and we lost all our guilty stains. By faith, we saw the Lord Jesus, as our great High Priest, standing at the altar, and offering himself as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and now that he has taken away our sins, and our conscience has a sweet rest in a sense of acceptance in the Beloved, we have learned Christ's priesthood, not only out of the Book, but because the blood of his atonement has been sprinkled upon us. God has seen the blood, and has passed over us; the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, has cleansed us from all sin, that blood has brought us nigh to God, and at this very hour it is speaking to our heart better things than the blood of Abel ever spake; and, thus, we have learned Christ as our Priest.

It is the same with his kingship; some of us never doubted that Christ is a King, we were brought up to believe it; but, in a much higher sense, we feel him to be our King now. We have bowed our willing neck to his gracious rule, and we can feel him reigning over our stubborn but subdued lusts, which would never have been conquered, and we ourselves should never have been led into happy captivity except through his gracious sovereignty; and, now, we do rejoice that, within our spirit, we have learned Christ for ourselves, and we know him as “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

Dear hearers, can you follow me in all this? Do you know anything experimentally concerning what I have been saying? Perhaps some of you do not; and that is not altogether surprising, for there is many "a master of Israel," like Nicodemus, who knows not these things. It is one thing to be a fluent talker about theological truths, but it is quite another thing to know Christ personally, to lay hold of him by faith so as to be able to say, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;" "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." Where that declaration is true, there is more in it than in all the eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero. Doctors of divinity may know many things, and yet not have learned Christ; but he who has learned Christ has been taught of God.

This blessed instruction will go further still, dear friends, when we come to *know Christ as to his character*. I advise you all frequently to read the life of Christ as it is recorded by the four Evangelists; that is the best "Life of Christ" that ever was written, or ever will be; and all the rest of the "Lives of Christ" might as well be burnt; for you can get a better idea of Christ's life from the four Gospels than from all other books put together. If you read aright the life of Christ as it is recorded in the Inspired Word, you will be struck with it, and delighted with it; and if you are a candid person, you must be charmed with it; but you will never truly learn it until God the Holy Spirit renews your own heart, and teaches you to love it, and makes you to be like Christ himself was. A man has not learned writing till he can write, and a man has not fully learned Christ till he lives like Christ; and that fact puts many of us on a very low form in the school of the Divine Teacher. If a man wants to learn a trade, he will have to do a great deal beside walking in and out of a workshop, and seeing how everybody else does certain things; he who properly learns a trade must learn it himself by practically working at it, and he who really learns Christ's character is the man who himself has Christ's character, there is at least something of likeness to Christ about him. I hope I can say of many here present that they are learning Christ, and that they have learned Christ, so that, in one point and another, there is something about you which should make men say, "They have been with Jesus,"—"they have learned him." He who lies down in beds of spices will smell of their sweetness, and he who lives with Christ will soon catch the savour of Christ. This is what we are aiming at,—to learn how to write as Christ did, imitating both the upstrokes and the downstrokes that are in the perfect copy;—to learn the trade and business of holiness, after the manner in which Christ carried it on while here below. There will be, doubtless, many flaws and imperfections in our imitation of him; but, still, we shall have learned something of the sacred art of doing our Father's business, and giving ourselves up wholly to his glory. I pray that we may all practically learn Christ in this way.

When that comes to pass, and we know the character of Christ, we then come to *know the sweet influences of Christ's person*. Knowing him, we see what charms there are in him, and what power he

has over human beings under all manner of circumstances. Did you ever feel Christ's power to break the heart? You have not learned him till you know that, for he has a way of speaking in such loving tones that the heart seems broken all in pieces. Have you ever learned his power to heal the heart that he has broken? Do you know it for yourself? Has your poor broken spirit, bleeding at a thousand wounds, suddenly found an effectual remedy for its impending destruction, and rested in peace? Oh, what charms there are in Christ to all true Christians! If you have ever really learned him, you know how he can take you up out of the cold world where you are lying freezing at his door, and lift you right inside where the fire is brightly burning, and fill you with intense delight. You know how, when you are creeping along the road, he can come, and bear you up as on eagle's wings; and how, when you can scarcely stir a foot towards heaven, he can, on a sudden, make your soul like the chariots of Amminadib. Have you never felt such raptures as Paul experienced when he was caught up to the third heaven, and did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body? Have you never felt that influence of Christ which makes a man's life to become sublime, and causes his every action to become something far beyond what mortal man unaided could ever perform? Have you never known what it is, through the power of Christ, to sit with him in the heavenly places, and from that altitude to look down on all the world, and to despise it utterly as a thing for babes to play with, or as a fool's bauble, while you have revelled in the eternal glories and the infinite bliss that God has prepared for you? Read Rutherford's letters, and if you have a spiritual understanding, you will say, "This man had indeed learned Christ." He was, like a harp, responsive to Christ's lightest touch. His Master did but lay his hand upon the strings, and the music came out at once; but you and I are often like an untuned harp, even our Lord's hand brings no music out of us because we are not in a fit condition. Oh, that we might all truly know Christ, and the power of his resurrection,—ay, and the power of his glorious second coming,—and the power of his spiritual presence when he draws near to us in all his love and grace! So, dear brethren, learning Christ really comes to this,—personal acquaintance with Christ, personal knowledge of his nature and his offices, a personal experience of his power over the human heart, a personal knowledge of him by the surrender of yourself to him, and by his coming to incorporate you with himself till, as it were, Christ shall live in you, and you shall live in Christ, and you twain shall be one henceforth and evermore. There is a great deal more in this subject than I can bring out of it, but I must leave this part of it with you for your quiet meditations.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, the apostle says something about HOW WE HAVE NOT LEARNED OUR LESSON: "ye have not so learned Christ."

There are some people who say that they have learned Christ, *yet they remain just as they were before.* They say that they are Christians, yet their lives give the lie to their language. They

walk as other Gentiles walk, yet they go to godly assemblies, and they sing pious hymns. But, beloved, "ye have not so learned Christ."

Some even profess to have learned Christ *so as to make an excuse for their sin* out of the very fact that he is so ready to pardon. They think that sin is a small matter, and that it will have no serious consequences; "but ye have not so learned Christ." We never hated sin so much as we have done since we learned what it cost our Lord to put it away. There are some who say that they have learned Christ, *yet they never obey him, nor serve him, nor try to imitate him.* "Ye have not so learned Christ." God save us from a dry doctrinal knowledge of Christ! God save us from any kind of knowledge of Christ which is not in connection with true saving faith in him, and with a practical obedience to him! There are some who talk much of what they know concerning Christ, who even commit sin in his name. We have nations marching to battle, to kill and plunder and murder in the name of Christ! What did the Spaniards do, in years gone by, with the Indians, but plunder and slaughter them professedly in the name of Jesus Christ? And there are some, in nominally Christian countries to-day, who act in the same fashion. The Lord have mercy upon them! "But ye have not so learned Christ."

We have met with some people who imagine that *they cannot have their sin conquered.* They think that they will be saved, but that sin is to have the mastery over them; but we have not so learned Christ, we have learned him after this fashion, that we desire to be perfectly like him, and we believe that we shall be. We are aiming at this, and asking him, by his Spirit, to change us into his own image from glory unto glory; and we are looking forward to the day when we shall see him as he is, and shall be altogether like him. When a man enters a room where the walls are covered with mirrors, he sees his own likeness reproduced on all sides; here, and there, and there, and there; so is it with Christ in heaven; all the saints reflect his image, and he sees himself in them all. This is their glory, and it is also his glory that he has given his image to them; and it is that image which we desire to reproduce even now.

Beware, dear friends, of trying to learn Christ in any other way but this practical way of which I have been speaking. Never be satisfied with a theoretical knowledge of Christ, nor with mere head knowledge of Christ, nor with a hypocritical knowledge of Christ.

III. Now, in the third place, we will notice HOW WE HAVE LEARNED CHRIST.

I call your particular attention to the latter part of the text: "If so be that ye have heard him." *We must be taught by Christ, and by the Holy Spirit.* Dear brethren, do you say that you know Christ, that you have learned Christ? Tell me how you have learned him. "I heard our minister preach." Yes, yes; but did you hear Christ? The only way of learning Christ is this: "If so be that ye have heard *him.*" You never know Christ by merely hearing men, you must hear Christ himself. Do you not recollect

his own words, "My sheep hear my voice"? They not only hear the voice of the under-shepherd, but they hear the voice of the chief Shepherd, the good Shepherd, that great Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, and you never can know Christ unless you have thus heard him speaking personally to you. You must regard the various sayings of Christ, recorded in this Book, not merely as things written in the Bible, but as the very words of the living Christ spoken afresh to you, each time you read them, just as though they had never been uttered before.

Perhaps you say, "Well, sir, all I know of Christ, I have learned from the Bible." It is quite right that it should be so; but how did you read the Bible? Did you merely become familiar with the letter of it, and get what you could out of it by your own wit and wisdom? Then you have not yet learned Christ, for it is only as the Holy Ghost shall make the printed letter to be the very voice of Jesus Christ himself to you that you will ever truly know him. I do not see how I am to know a man to whom I have never spoken, and who has never spoken to me. He may pass my house day by day, yet if we never speak to one another, I cannot get to know him. A certain philosopher once said, "Speak, and I shall see you." So we may say to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Speak to me, Lord, and then I shall know thee." None but Christ can manifest Christ. You cannot see the sun except by its own light, neither can you see Christ except by his own light, that is, by the Holy Spirit.

Now notice the next sentence: "and have been taught by him." The Greek is "in" him: "and have been taught in him;" that is to say, *the only way of learning more of Christ is by being in fellowship with him.* It very frequently happens to me that somebody calls to see me professing to have a message from God to deliver to me; it is usually some crack-brained individual or other, who is not quite right in the upper story; but I will not receive messages that come in that fashion; if the Lord wants to say anything to me, he knows where I live. I feel inclined to talk to these people as John Bunyan did to the Quaker who went to Bedford jail, and said to him, "Friend Bunyan, the Lord has sent me with a message for thee, and I have been half over England trying to find thee." "Nay," said honest John, "thou art telling a lie, friend; for if the Lord had sent thee to me, he would have directed thee straight here. I have been in this prison for the last twelve years, and he has known all the time where I was." These roundabout, cross-country messages do not come from Christ at all. We learn him by being with him. Is it not said that, if you want to know a man, you must live with him? Mr. Whitefield was once asked the character of a certain person, but he replied, "I cannot tell you." "Why not?" the enquirer asked. "Because I have never lived with him; after I have lived with him for a while, I shall be able to tell you what I think of him." So, if you want to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you must live with him. First he must himself speak to you, and afterwards you must abide in him. He must be the choice Companion of your morning hours, he must be with you throughout the day, and with

him you must also close the night; and as often as you may wake during the night, you must say, "When I awake, I am still with thee." There is no way of fully learning Christ except by being perpetually with him. I should suppose that a man, who has been in heaven five minutes, actually beholding Christ, knows more of him than the most instructed member of the assembly of divines ever learns here below. Oh, how much we shall learn of Christ in our first glimpse of him! Oh, that these eyes could behold him even now! Some people talk and write a great deal about what we shall see in heaven; but I do not pay much heed to what they say. It will be a long while before I shall want to take my eyes off my Saviour. I agree with Dr. Watts in that verse which we have often sung,—

"Millions of years my wondering eyes  
Shall o'er thy beauties rove;  
And endless ages I'll adore  
The glories of thy love."

We shall learn Christ faster there than we can here because we shall be always with him, and we shall see him as he is.

The last part of the text says, "and have been taught in him, as truth is in Jesus;" there is no word "the" in the original, it is "as truth is in Jesus." That is to say, we must truly know Christ as truth, and *it should be our desire to know truth even as it is in him*. Truth is in Christ fully, so we must seek to know it fully. Truth is also in Christ practically,—it is embodied in him. Truth in Christ was not a mere philosophy, not simply dry doctrine; but he lived the truth, yea, he was the truth. This is how we want to know Christ,—till truth in Christ shall be truth revealed to us, truth embodied in us, truth lived out again by us "as truth is in Jesus,"—every lie put far away from us, all guile and deceit for ever banished. As truth was in Jesus, with no fiction, and no guile, as he was pure, simple-minded, child-like, so shall we become through learning him, and being made like him; we too shall become true, transparent, candid, honest, upright, Christlike men. I wish we were all like that, dear friends; but we know too much, or think we do, we are too cunning, and look too much round about us, to be as Christ was. People laugh at us if we wear our hearts upon our sleeve for daws to peck at; and we think that we should keep ourselves to ourselves, and be careful, and cautious, and even suspicious of all we meet. Oh, but I would rather be taken in a thousand times than suspect other people! It is better to wear your heart wide open, though men laugh at its every movement, than it is to cover it up, and try to conceal what we really are. God make us like the holy child Jesus,—children of God, with Christ Jesus for our elder Brother! That is what we shall be when we have learned Christ, and have heard him, and have been taught by him as truth is in him. May it be so with all of us! God bless you, and help you to cherish and to realize this desire, for Christ's own name's sake! Amen.

## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

## ZECHARIAH XIII.

Verse 1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

They shall see their pardon when they have truly seen their sin. When once the foulness of their transgression is perceived, then the fountain of cleansing shall be perceived, too. No man ever knows the preciousness of the God-given remedy till he has felt the force of the terrible disease. No one by faith plunges into the crystal fount of perfect cleansing without first lamenting the filthiness which needs to be removed.

2. *And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.*

Where there is pardon, there is sure to be sanctification. The idols must fall, and the false prophets must go. We cannot have our sins and have a Saviour, too. If we have Christ to blot out our sin, we must have the same Christ to remove sin as to its authority, and power, and dominion over us.

3. *And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy,—*

*When any false prophet shall still pretend to prophesy,—*

3. *Then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.*

So intense shall be the hatred of false prophets, that men shall not spare even their own children. They shall abhor them when they stand up against the Lord of hosts, and against his truth.

4. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:*

They shall give up this wicked employment at once and for ever. Just as when one, who has pretended to tell fortunes, is converted, and he forsakes that evil occupation; so converted men must never be in association with those who are familiar with the spirits of the dead, and who practise sorcery and the like abominations. Everything of the kind is to be abhorred by godly men, and they must turn away from it with holy horror and disgust.

5, 6. *But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?*

What are these marks of the idol gods and goddesses? Have you not been branded with them? Did you not belong to the accursed fraternity that worship idols, and receive the *stigmata* in their hands?

6. *Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

Idolatry shall become so detestable a thing that he will say anything rather than acknowledge that he has had aught to do with idols. Those very marks in which the false prophets once gloried, they shall loathe. The Brahmin shall throw away his sacred thread, and those who have been tattooed in honour of other false gods shall hate the marks of shame that are upon their persons.

Now, brethren, inasmuch as the heathen prophets received in their bodies the marks of their gods, we understand something of what Paul meant when he wrote to the Galatians, "From henceforth let no man

trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He regarded his baptism as a kind of water-mark that could not be removed; he looked upon the marks of the scourge, with which he had been beaten again and again for Christ's sake, as being proofs that he belonged to Jesus. They stamped him with the broad arrow of the great King, so that all men might know that he was dedicated to him and to his service, tattooed with marks in his flesh that were indelible, and never to be removed.

7, 8. *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.*

So, in the times of God's fiercest judgments, he has a remnant according to the election of grace who shall escape the sword, because that sword has been awakened against him who was their Representative, their Surety, and who stood as Substitute in their place.

9. *And I will bring the third part through the fire,—*

"Saved; yet so as by fire." This is true in a certain sense of all the righteous; they shall certainly be saved, and though the fires of persecution should rage around, the Lord will bring them through the fire. They shall not perish in it, but they shall even derive good from it: "I will bring the third part through the fire,"—

9. *And will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:*

If you are God's people, you will certainly be tried and tested. As surely as ever God has put you in the third part that he will save, he has also ordained that you should pass through the fire. You shall have, both within and without, that which shall test your sincerity, and prove whether your faith is of divine origin or not. There is no easy road to heaven.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Yet we who believe in Jesus are not an unhappy people; the character of God's saints is still according to Paul's paradoxes, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

9. *They shall call on my name, and I will hear them:*

What a precious little sentence: "they shall call on my name"! And God will give ear to their prayer: "and I will hear them." The "shall" and the "will" are put close together, and the one is as much the work of God's grace as the other is: "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them."

9. *I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*

Note these quick responses,—echoes, as it were. They call, and God hears. God speaks, and they reply. God says, "It is my people." They answer, "The Lord is my God." Blessed are you if you can join in these heart-echoes, or can say, with the spouse, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." Is there this mutual interchange of love between you and the all-glorious Lord? If so, thrice happy are you; but if not, God grant that you may speedily enter into this secret of the Lord! May he bless to every one of us the reading of his Word, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.