

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION Chapter 26 Its Need Revisited

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Transcript

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Chapter 26

Its Need Revisited

In the previous chapters we have shown at some length the need for and the nature of reconciliation being effected between God and those who have broken His Law. We have dwelt upon the amazing fact that, though He was the One wronged, yet God took the initiative and is the Author of recovering the rebellious unto Himself. We have seen how that project engaged His eternal counsels in the Everlasting Covenant, and that therein His wisdom found a way by which His love might flow forth unto the guilty without any sully of His holiness or flouting of His justice, and how that the Son fully concurred in the Father's counsels and voluntarily performed the stupendous work in order to their accomplishment. We have already considered that which God requires from sinners if they are to become actual participants of the good of Christ's mediation and personally "receive the reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11). We are therefore now ready to contemplate the "results" or fruits of that reconciliation—the consequences which follow from the new relation to God and His Law which the sinner enters into upon his repentance and saving acceptance of the Gospel. Causes and their effects need ever to be distinguished if we are to obtain something more than a vague and general idea of the things with which they are concerned. It is by confounding principles and their products that so many are confused. As we have shown in previous chapters, reconciliation is one of the principal results which issue from the sacrifice of Christ. Strictly speaking it has a fourfold cause. The will of the Father, or His eternal counsels, was its originating cause. The mediation of the incarnate Son is its meritorious and procuring cause. The work of the Spirit in the souls of the elect is the efficient cause, for it is by His gracious and invincible operations they are capacitated to do that which God requires of them before they become actual partakers of the benefits of Christ's mediation. The repentance and faith of the awakened and convicted sinner is the instrumental cause by which he is reconciled to God. We say that reconciliation is one of the principal results from Christ's sacrifice—redemption, remission, sanctification are others, and they are so intimately related that it is not easy to prevent an overlapping of them in our thoughts. But in what follows we shall treat, mainly, not of the effect of Christ's redemptive work, but rather the results of reconciliation itself. Perhaps the most comprehensive of any single statement in Holy Writ concerning the outcome of reconciliation is found in that brief but pregnant word "Christ has also once suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us

to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). "Bring us to God" is a general expression for the whole benefit which ensues from reconciliation, including the removal of all obstacles and impediments and the bestowment of all requisites and blessings. Formerly there was a legal hostility and moral dissimilarity between God and us, with the want of intercourse and fellowship, but now those who were once "far off" are "made nigh" (Eph. 2:13). In consequence of what Christ did and suffered, His people have been enstated into life, brought into the favor of God, become par-takers of the nature of God, have restored to them the image of God, are given access to God, are favored to have communion with Him and will yet enjoy the eternal and ineffable vision of Him. Let that serve as our outline. 1. The initial consequence of our reconciliation to God by Christ is that we have life: a life in Law. That is an aspect of our subject which, fundamental though it be, has received scarcely any attention from theologians and Bible teachers. It is one which is familiar to few of God's people, and therefore calls for both explanation and elaboration. By our sin and fall in Adam we died legally, our life-in-law was lost, for we came under its curse. The Divine Judge had threatened our federal head "In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die," and "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). The case of each descendant of his upon entering this world is like that of a murderer in the condemned cell—awaiting the hour of execution unless he be reprieved. We are by nature "the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) and until we savingly believe in the Son "the wrath of God abides on us" (John 3:36). We have no life in Law, no title to its award, but are transgressors, and as such under its death sentence—"condemned already" (John 3:18). The consequence of Adam's dying legally was that he also died spiritually: that is, his soul became vitiated and depraved. He lost the moral image of God and the capacity to enjoy Him or please Him. Legal death and spiritual death are quite distinct (John 5:24), the latter being entailed by the former. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12)—not simply "entered into" all men, but "passed upon" them as a judicial sentence. "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Rom. 5:18). The guilt of the federal head was imputed unto all he represented—evidenced by so many dying in infancy, for since even physical death is part of the wages of sin and infants having not personally committed any, they must be suffering the consequences of the sin of another. But Adam died spiritually as well as legally, and his depravity is imparted to all his descendants, so that they enter this world both legally and spiritually "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). Now it is only by Christ, "the last Adam," that we can regain life either legally or spiritually. That they obtain spiritual life from Christ, is well understood by the saints, but His having secured for them a life in Law, most of them are quite ignorant about. Yet Rom. 5 is very emphatic on the point: "For if by one man offence death reigned by one (i.e. a single transgression), much more they which receive abundance of grace (to meet not only the original but their own innumerable transgressions) and of the gift of righteousness (i.e. the imputed obedience of Christ) shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the one offence judgment came on all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men to justification of life" (Rom. 5:17, 18)—note well that last clause: not "the free gift entered into all men in to regeneration of life." Justification is entirely a legal matter and concerns our status before the Lawgiver. As God's elect lost their life in law through the disobedience of their first federal head, so the obedience of their last Federal Head has secured for them a life in law. Christ is the fountain of life unto all His spiritual seed, and that, not as the second Person in the Trinity, but as the God-man Mediator. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:19), which has reference to Christ officially and not essentially. Failure to grasp that truth has resulted in some verses of Scripture being grievously misunderstood and misinterpreted, to the dishonoring of our blessed Lord. For instance, when He declared "For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (John 5:26) He was there speaking of Himself as incarnate. As God the Son, co-essential and

co-glorious with the Father, He always had "life in Himself"—"in Him was life" (John 1:4) which refers to His essential person before He became incarnate. But as God-man Mediator the Father gave Him "to have life in Himself." He gave Him a mediatorial life and fulness for His people. "As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him" (John 17:2) presents the same aspect of Truth—Christ was there speaking as the Mediator, as is evident from His high priestly prayer which immediately follows. "As the living Father has sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eats Me even he shall live by Me." (John 6:57). That title "the living Father" respects Him in connection with the economy of redemption and expresses His supremacy over the office of His Son, as the One who covenanted and sent Him forth on His grand mission. In His Godhead the Son has life — has it essentially, originally, independently in Himself, as a Person co-eternal with the Father. But as Mediator, the life which Christ lived and lives to God, and which in the discharge of His mediatorial office He bestows on His people, is derived from and is dependent upon the will of the Father, for in office the Son is lower than and inferior to the Father—in that respect, and in that only, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), He declared. In affirming that "I live by the Father" (John 6:57), Christ signified that His mediatorial life was sustained by the Father. Let it be clearly understood that in John 6:57 the Lord Jesus was speaking of Himself officially, mediatorially, and not essentially as God the Son. "I live by the Father. "The Father prepared a body for Him (Heb. 10:5) and all the days of His flesh was upholding Him by the right hand of His righteousness. Christ definitely acknowledged this again and again, by the Spirit of prophecy and by His ministerial utterances: "Thou maintainest My lot . . . I have set the Lord always before Me. Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:5,8). "I gave My back to the smiters and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I shall not be confounded" (Isa. 50:5,6). "I came down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38). "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works" . . . "as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John 14: 10,31). In all these passages He spoke as the dependent One, the Mediator. By purchase Christ ratified His title to the mediatorial life—"Now the God of peace (the propitiated and reconciled One) that brought again from the dead (not "the," but "our") Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," nor as the God-man considered as a private person, that God raised Him—but as the God-man Mediator and Surety of His people—by His own essential power Christ emerged from the tomb (John 2:19; 10:17). By the right of conquest Christ secured the mediatorial life, being made a royal priest "after the power of an endless life"—"He asked life of You (cf. Ps. 2:8)! Thou gayest it Him, even length of days forever and ever" (Heb. 7:16; Ps. 21:5). He has an official right and title to life because He had "magnified the Law and made it honorable"(Isa.42:21)—magnified it by rendering to it a personal, perfect and perpetual obedience in thought, word and deed, and that as the God-man Mediator, "For Moses described the righteousness which is of the Law, that the man who does these things shall live by them." It has not been sufficiently recognized that the converse of "the wages of sin is death" is "the award of obedience is lift!" The first man violated the Law and therefore suffered its penalty; but the last man fulfilled the Law and therefore obtained a right to its reward. Christ found the Commandment "unto lift" (Rom. 7:10), and it was for that life (the reward of the Law) He "asked" (Ps. 21:5) and which He received (Heb. 6:16) after He had vanquished death. Christ "reigns in life" (Rom. 5:17, in "justification of life" (Rom. 5:18 and cf. Isa. 50:8, 1 Tim. 3:16). Christ now "lives unto God" (Rom. 6:10) and He does so as the last Adam, as our Representative. Christ's life in law is also that of His people: "Christ our life" (Col. 3:4). Christ is the sole fountain of life, the source from which our life—both legal and spiritual—flows. It is for this reason that the scroll on which are the names of God's elect is inscribed is called "the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27), it is the Mediator's book for "the Lamb" is always expressive

of Christ as the Priest and sacrifice of His people, and it is His mediatorial life which He shares with us. The antithesis of sin is righteousness, for as sin is the transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4) so righteousness is rightness or measuring up to the standard of right, and therefore consists of fulfilling the Law. And since the God-man Mediator perfectly obeyed it, we are told that "He is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes" (Rom. 10:4). Now just as sin and death cannot be separated, so righteousness and life are indivisible. A further appeal to Romans 5 establishes that: "they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ. . . by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men into justification of life as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by ("in") Jesus Christ our Lord" (vv. 17, 18, 21)—in each case it is a premial (?) life or one of reward from the Law. "Christ our life" (Col. 3:4): apart from Him we have no standing before the Law, no title to its award; but being federally and judicially one with Him, then that which was due Him in return for His perfect fulfillment of the Law's requirements is due those He represented. Far too little attention has been paid to the first member in the antithesis presented in Deut. 28, namely, "that these blessings shall come on you and overtake you if you shall listen diligently to the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be... blessed shall be... blessed shall be... blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out" (verses 2-6); which is set over against "But. . . if you will not hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God to observe to do all His commandments. . . that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you" etc. (v. 5 etc.). Just as surely as the Law pronounces a curse on those who break it, so the Law pronounces a blessing on those who keep it. The curse is death, and the blessing life, and that blessing the God-man Mediator obtained as the Surety of His people. As Christ is, objectively and by imputation, "our righteousness," so He is objectively and by imputation "our life." By Christ those who are reconciled to God have life in law, and that is the foundation of all the other results or consequences of their restoration to His judicial favor. 2. Pardon from God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). The trespasses of God's penitent and believing people are not charged against them, because His wisdom discovered a way by which He might be fully recompensed for the wrong which our sins did unto His majesty — by imputing them to our Substitute and exacting vengeance upon Him for the same. Our iniquities were laid upon Him and because of them He suffered "the Just for the unjust." That which was the ground of reconciliation was likewise the ground of the pardon of our iniquities: "In whom we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). Remission was the ransom-price which Christ paid' unto God's justice, and therefore a principal part of our reconciliation is the remission of our sins. Remission of sins means that the guilt damnation of them is cancelled, and therefore that we are released from the penalty and punishment of them, and that, because the punishment was borne by Christ and God's wrath appeased. Now observe how inseparably connected is the pardon of the believer's sins with his possessing a life in law before God. As we have shown above, obedience to the Law (in the person of our Surety) is righteousness, and where there is righteousness the Law bestows blessing, as surely as it pronounces a curse on all unrighteousness. Now what does the blessing of the Law consist of? Negatively, that it has naught against us, and where that is the case none can truly "lay anything to our charge." Positively, that it pronounces us righteous, and as such, entitled to its award and blessing. Therefore we are told "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity" (Ps. 32:1,2). Yet we need to be on our guard against drawing a false inference from this. As Christians we still transgress and therefore need to beg for daily forgiveness — as well as for daily bread, as Matt. 6:12 plainly shows. As Christ is required to ask and sue out the fruits of His mediation (Ps. 2:7), so we are enjoined to humbly sue out our right of forgiveness—Jeremiah 3:12; 1 John 1:9. 3. Peace with God.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). This verse has been commonly misunderstood, through supposing the "peace" there mentioned to be that which is subjective rather than objective. The verse is not speaking about that peace of conscience when assured of Divine forgiveness, when the burden of our sin is removed and left at the foot of the cross, nor to that "peace of God which passes all understanding," that keeps the hearts and minds of God's children when they are anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make known their requests unto God (Phil. 4:6,7); but to "peace with God." It is not a state of mind, but a relation to the Lawgiver which is in view. It is not tranquility of heart, but that relation which arises from the expiation of sin and consequent justification. "Peace with God" means that He no longer regards us as His enemies in the objective sense of the term, but are now the objects of His favor. It is that state of things which ensues from the cessation of hostilities. It means that the sword of Divine justice, which smote our Shepherd (Zech. 13:7), is now forever sheathed. "Peace with God" means that we are no longer the objects of His displeasure, and therefore that we no more have any cause to dread the Divine vengeance. If due attention is paid to the first clause of Rom. 5:1 there should be no difficulty in understanding the second: the illative "therefore" pointing the connection. In the previous chapters the apostle had proved that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that they are guilty and under the condemnation of the Law. They are therefore viewed by Him as "enemies" and as such they are "without strength" or ability to help themselves. In blessed contrast therefrom in 5:1-11 the apostle described at length the glorious status and state of those who are justified by faith. Justification imports the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 4:5-7) and that imports "peace with God," that He is reconciled to us, that He no longer frowns but smiles upon us. To "peace with God" is added "through our Lord Jesus Christ" not "by the operation of the Holy Spirit" as had been the case if peace of conscience had been in view. As Christ is "our life" (Col. 3:4) objectively and legally, so He is "our peace" (Eph. 2:14) objectively and legally. Just as spiritual life wrought in our souls through regeneration is the consequence of the legal life which we have in Christ, so inward peace or the purging of our consciences from dead works follows from the peace which Christ made (Col. 1:20) by the blood of His cross, though the measure of our inward peace is largely determined by the daily exercise of our faith (Rom. 15:13). Here again we may perceive how, intimately one result is linked with another. The antitypical Melchizedek is first "King of righteousness" "and then "King of peace" (Heb. 7:2). "The work of righteousness shall be peace." That is, the mediatorial work of Christ shall produce "peace with God," "and the effect of righteousness (as it is apprehended by faith), quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17). "We have peace with God" because "the chastisement of our peace" (Heb. peaces) "was upon Him" (Isa. 53:5). Peace here and hereafter, objectively and subjectively, with God and in the conscience the whole corrective or punishment which produced them was laid upon Christ. "By submitting to those chastisements Christ slew the enmity and settled the amity between God and man...and God not only saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship. Christ was in pain, that we might be at ease" (Matt. Henry). 4. Brought into God's favor. By nature, and by practice Christians were "the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3), being under the curse of the Law—all the threatenings of God in full force against them. But condemnation, awful as it is, is not damnation—the sentence is not yet executed, and until it is, it is not irrevocable. But once the sinner savingly believes in Christ he stands in a new relation to God as Lawgiver and Judge. He is no longer under the condemning power of the Law, but is "under grace." As the manslayer on having entered the city of refuge was, by a special constitution of mercy, secure from the avenger of blood (Num. 35:12), so the sinner who has "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us" in the Gospel (Heb. 6:18), is, by the gracious constitution of God, forever secured from the curse. All the threatenings which until this time belonged to him, no longer stand against him, but are reckoned by the Judge of all as having been executed on his Substitute, who was made a

curse for His people. But more: the favor of God, Divine blessing, is now his status and portion. When Christ reconciled the Church unto God He did more than put away her sins and avert the judicial wrath of God. He reinstated her in God's favor and opened the way for the full manifestation of His love unto her. The two things are clearly distinguished in Colossians 1:20. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself." As we have so often pointed out in these articles, "reconciliation" consists of two things: the removal of enmity, and the restoring of amity—the two parts of Christ's mediatorial work, respectively, effecting them. His bloodshedding or enduring the curse of the Law removed the enmity or "making peace," His obedience to the Law or bringing in "an everlasting righteousness" procuring the reward and entitling unto the Divine blessing. The shedding of Christ's atoning blood obtained for His people the remission or pardon of their sins. His meritorious obedience secured for them the justification of their persons in the high court of Heaven, or their admittance into God's judicial favor. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:1, 2). As we pointed out in the last, "peace with God" refers not to a subjective experience but to an objective fact, that it signifies not tranquility of soul but a relation to the Lawgiver. Hostilities between the Divine Judge and His believing people have ceased. His sword of justice is sheathed, and therefore they no longer have cause to dread His vengeance. But that is more or less a negative thing: there is something else, something positive, something more blessed. That additional benefit is introduced in Romans 5:2 by the word "also." Suppose that one of the nobles of the land who stood high at court and enjoyed special privileges from his sovereign, should commit some grave offence against the throne, in fact turn traitor. We can imagine that, in his clemency the king might pardon the offender upon the acknowledgement of his crime and his suing for mercy, but we can scarcely conceive of the monarch restoring his subject to the intimacy and privileges he formerly enjoyed. Yet that is what Christ has done—restored apostate traitors to the full favor of God. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Christ has not only brought us into a legal state in which we are secure from God's wrath, but into one of intimate friendship with Him. It is indeed a great mercy that God has ceased to be offended with us, that He will never inflict any penal punishment upon us; but it is a far greater and grander blessing that He should regard us with pleasure and pour blessings upon us. "By whom also we have access" implies that by nature we did not, and that by our efforts we could not. Previous to conversion our standing was in disgrace, but now we are "accepted in the Beloved," (Eph. 1:6), or as it might more literally be rendered "graced in the Beloved." Christ has reinstated His people in the good will and perfect acceptance of God: "this is the true grace of God wherein you stand" (1 Pet. 5:12). We stand in the full favor of God, with not a single cloud between us. By the mediatorial work of Christ the believer has full right of approach to the Divine mercyseat, to gaze upon the face of a reconciled God, to dwell in His glorious presence for evermore. For this is no transient blessing which the obedience and bloodshedding of Christ has procured for His people, but a permanent and unalienable one. It is not only that they are admitted into God's favor, but it is "this grace wherein we stand"—in which you are eternally settled and established. It is not only that God will never again be at judicial enmity against them, but that He is forever their Friend. The blessings which Christ has obtained for His redeemed are not contingent or evanescent ones, for they are dependent upon nothing whatever in or from them, but are the unforfeitable procurements of His infinitely-meritorious righteousness. And therefore has the Father made a covenant-promise to His Son concerning those He transacted for, "I will not turn away from them to do them good" (Jer. 32:40). We have been received into the most cordial good will and everlasting favor of the Father. 5. Given access to God. The very first message from Heaven after the advent of the Prince of peace revealed the purpose for which the Son had become incarnate and made known what He would accomplish from His mission.

"There was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13,14). That brief word contained a broad outline of the whole subject of reconciliation. First, it declared that the glory of God was its grand design, for that ever takes precedence of all other considerations. Second, it proclaimed that the issue of it would be peace on earth—not "in the earth," but a revolted province restored to fealty. Third, it announced, as the "and" connecting the first and second clauses shows, that God's glory and the good of His people go and in hand. Though He would show Himself a Friend to them, yet He would conserve His own interests and maintain His own honor. Fourth, it published the grand outcome: "good will toward men"—they brought into God's favor. The final clause may also be rendered "good will among men"—Jew and Gentile made one! Now no sooner had the Peacemaker exemplified God's holiness, magnified His law, and pacified His wrath, in this way glorifying Him to the superlative degree, than we are told "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51). That was a parable in action, and one possessed of profound spiritual significance. There were several other remarkable phenomena which immediately followed the death of Christ, but the Holy Spirit has placed first the rending of the temple veil. He calls our attention to that miraculous happening with the word "Behold"—bidding us pause and consider this marvel, be awed by it, amazed over it. That "veil" was a magnificent curtain hung between the holy place and the holy of holies, separating the one from the other, barring an entrance into the innermost chamber and shutting out from view its holy furniture from the sight of those in the second compartment. It was rent asunder at the moment Christ expired. Immediately the soul and spirit were separated from Christ's body, an invisible hand separated the veil. Amazing synchronization was that! Christ was the true Tabernacle or Temple (John 1:14), and therefore when His flesh was rent (Heb. 10:20), there was an answering rending of the structure which typed forth His flesh. Well may we reverently inquire, What was signified by that? First, though subordinately, it signified a revelation of the O.T. mysteries. The veil of the temple was for concealment. 'Out of all the congregation of Israel only one man was ever permitted to enter the holy of holies, and he but once a year, and then in a cloud of incense—symbolizing the darkness of that dispensation. But now, by the death of Christ, all is laid open: the shadows give place to the substance, the mysteries are unveiled. Second, and dispensationally, the uniting of Jew and Gentile by the removal of the partition wall—the ceremonial law (Eph. 2:14, 15)—which had separated them. But third, and chiefly, that a new and living way had been opened unto God: the rending of the veil opened the door into the holiest, where He abode between the cherubim. The rending of the veil signified and announced free access unto God. First, for Christ Himself. During the three hours of darkness the Redeemer was cut off from God. But when the veil was rent there was an anticipation of what is recorded in Hebrews 9:11,12. Though Christ did not officially enter Heaven till forty days after his resurrection, yet He acquired the right to enter immediately (as our Surety) when He cried "It is finished," and had a virtual admission. Therein we may perceive the conformity between the Head and the members of His Body: the moment a sinner savingly believes in Christ he has a title to enter heaven, yet he has to wait his appointed time ere he does so in the fullest sense. Second, for the redeemed. Christ has procured an entrance for them in spirit and by faith even now: "Having therefore, brethren boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Christ, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is say His flesh" (Heb. 10:19, 20). We have a free access to the throne of grace. "Through Christ we both (believing Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). It was sin which estranged us from the Holy One. Upon his first transgression Adam was driven out of paradise. The whole congregation of Israel at Sinai were commanded to keep their distance. The unclean in Israel were debarred from the camp and tabernacle. By so many different emblems did the Lord signify that sin had obstructed our access to Him. "But now in Christ Jesus, you who sometime were far off are made nigh by

the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13), because His blood put away our sins. The efficacy of His sacrifice and the virtue of His meritorious obedience conferred upon His believing people the right to draw near unto God. All legal distance is removed: reconciliation has been effected: access to God is their consequent privilege and right. What a wonder of wonders is this! that one who is by nature a depraved creature may by grace, and through the Mediator, not only approach unto God without servile fear, but may have blessed fellowship with Him. To come into His very presence as a consciously accepted worshipper is the distinguishing blessing of Christianity in contrast from Judaism, Romanism and all false religions.. 6. Endowed with the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The mighty work of the Spirit in us is as indispensable as the meritorious work of Christ for us in order to appear before God as acceptable worshippers. As it is by the obedience and sufferings of Christ we have the title of access to God, so it is by the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Spirit we have personal meetness for the same. That was typed out of old under the Mosaic economy. Those who drew near unto Jehovah in the services of His house were required to have not only the consecrating blood applied to their persons, but to be sprinkled with the anointing oil (Lev. 8:24, 30). Three things are required if we are to worship God right. There must be knowledge in the understanding that we may be informed of what God approves and accepts, grace in the heart so that our communion with Him may be a real and spiritual one and not merely a bodily and formal one, strength in the soul for the exercise of faith, love, reverence and delight. By the Spirit alone are those three essentials imparted. Now it is from a reconciled God, in virtue of Christ's meritorious work, that we receive the sanctifying Spirit. This is evident from the particular character in which the apostle addressed Deity in the following prayers: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thess. 5:23); "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight" (Heb. 13:20,21). The "God of peace" is the pacified and reconciled God, and the blessings which the apostle requested are bestowed or wrought in us by the Spirit. Christ prayed that His redeemed might be loved as He was loved of the Father (John 17)—not in degree, but in kind; and the sanctifying graces of the Spirit are the tokens and evidences of His love, the manifestations of His heart toward His people. Or, as Manton so beautifully expressed it, they are "the jewels of the covenant, with which the Spouse of Christ is decked." Even the regenerate, harassed as they are by indwelling sin and hindered by their infirmities, can no more spiritually approach unto the Father without the gracious operations of the Spirit than they could without the mediation of Christ. The One supplies the experimental enablement, as the Other has the legal right. The Spirit's operations within us are imperative if our leaden hearts are to be raised above the things of time and sense, if our affections are to flow forth unto their rightful Object, if faith is to be duly acted upon Him, if a sense of His presence is to be felt in our souls. He alone can empower us experimentally to have real fellowship with God, so that He is glorified and we edified. How shall we ask for those things which are according to the Divine will unless the Spirit prompts us (Rom. 8:26)? How shall we "sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16) without the Spirit's quickenings? How shall we bring forth fruit to the glory of God without the Spirit energizing us? And our enduement with the Spirit is one of the bestowments—the chief of them—of a reconciled God. 7. God's acceptance of our services. Those "services" may be broadly and briefly summed up as our obedience and worship. But says the self-emptying Christian, What can a poor, sinful creature like me possibly offer unto God which would be acceptable unto Him? The proud religionist may boast of his performances and plume his fine feathers, but not so one whose eyes have been anointed by the Spirit so that he sees himself in God's light. The one who is really "poor in spirit," realizes not only that his very righteousnesses as a natural man are as "filthy rags," but that his most spiritual works as a regenerate man are defective and defiled. How then

shall such services be received by the Holy One? Some may experience a difficulty at this point and ask, Since the spiritual works of a Christian are wrought by the Holy Spirit, how can they be defiled? Answer: they are wrought by His agency and yet are performed by us. The purest water is fouled when it passes through a soiled pipe. The most brilliant lamp is blurred if it shines through a smoky chimney. Thus it is with what the Spirit produces through us. But since our obedience and worship are so faulty and polluted, how can God accept them? Turn back to the first worshipper on this sin-cursed earth: "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat of them. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Gen. 4:4). It was by faith Abel offered that "excellent sacrifice" (Heb. 11:4) which so blessedly foreshadowed the Lamb of God, and "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." The worshipper himself was first accepted and then his worship! Thus it has been ever since. The person is first taken into God's favor, and then his services are acknowledged as well-pleasing unto Him. Yet that does not furnish a complete answer to the question. Other types have to be taken note of if we are to obtain a complete picture. On the forehead of Israel's high priest was a plate of pure gold bearing the inscription "Holiness to the Lord." He wore it that he might "bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts, and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord" (Ex. 28:36-38). Christ bore the defects of our "holy things" and because of His holiness God accepts from us whatever is sincere. "The sinful failings of our best actions are hid and covered: they are not examined by a severe Judge, but accepted by a loving Father" (Manton). That is true, but it fails to show how the Father is righteously able to act so graciously. It is not because there has been any relating of His holiness or lowering of His standard, but because our Surety made full satisfaction to God's holiness for the sinful failings of their best actions. But even that is not all, for it is largely negative: our sincere obedience and reverent worship is accepted by the Father because the same ascends to God perfumed with the merits of Christ. In Revelation 8:3 He is seen as the Angel of the Covenant, "And there was given unto Him much incense that He should add it to the prayers of all saints!" Thus it is "by Him" that we offer the sacrifice of praise to God (Heb. 13:15). As those made "priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6) we are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices," and they are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5), and they are acceptable because He has effected a perfect reconciliation between God and the Church. 8. Our eternal security. In view of all that has been brought out under the previous heads, there is little need for us to enlarge upon this one. So perfect was the sacrifice which Christ offered to God on behalf of His Church that there is a perpetuity annexed to it: "by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Its efficacy is of everlasting force and its merits are imputed to the believer without cessation. Christ made an end of sins, effected reconciliation for iniquity and brought in an everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). That righteousness is imputed to His people and placed upon them as a robe (Isa. 61:10), and such is its virtue and vitality that it never wears out. But more: the risen Christ now serves continually as the Advocate of His people, pleading His sacrifice on their behalf, and suing out the benefits of it. "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). If while we were the objects of the Divine displeasure Christ restored us to God's favor, much more now that we are God's friends will He obtain pardon for our daily transgressions and secure our final salvation. The life of our risen Saviour is the security of His people: "because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19). "Christ is not only the Mediator of reconciliation to make our peace, but the Mediator of intercession to preserve it. He only took away our sins by His death; He only can preserve our reconciliation by His life. As He suffered effectively by the strength of His Deity to make our peace, so He intercedes in the strength of His merit to preserve peace. He did not only take away, but 'abolished and slew the enmity' (Eph. 2:15,16). He slew it to make it incapable of living again, and if any sin stands up to provoke justice, He sits as an Advocate to answer the process (1 John 2:2). As

God was in Christ reconciling the world, so He is in Christ giving out the fruits of that reconciliation, not imputing our trespasses unto us. Our constant access to God is by Christ. He sits in Heaven to lead us by the hand unto the Father, as a prince in favor brings a man into the presence of a gracious king" (Charnock). The sum of this, and the grand and infallible conclusion to which it all leads is, that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:39). 9. God for us—loving, providing for, protecting, blessing us. If we have been brought into His favor, and if He is the Ruler of the universe, then what will necessarily follow? This: that He will make "all things work together for our good" (Rom. 8:28). Nay more: "All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's and Christ is God's"(1 Cor. 3:21-23). "Christ is God's" is a relation based upon the Mediatorial office. To Him, as the rightful Heir, God has given "all things" (Heb. 1:2), and by virtue of our relation to Christ, all things are ours—relatively, and subject to God's government for our good. 10. The beatific vision. On the resurrection morning, the body of the believer will be "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body" (Phil. 3:21), then in spirit, soul and body, we shall be "like Him" (1 John 3:2), fully and eternally "conformed to the image of God's Son" (Rom. 8:29). Then will His prayer receive answer, "Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24).

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