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Redemption.

BY THE
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I. DELIVERANCE.

p. 1

'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'—1 Cor. i. 30.

It is one of the happy characteristics of the present day that persons are much more occupied than they used to be with the subject of emotional religion. The religion of feeling is much more studied than it was forty or fifty years ago. Modern books and modern addresses abound in the records of what is termed 'Experience.' To a certain extent this is well; for we all require real, deep, heart-religion, and it would indeed be a shocking thing that we should know the truth of God, and still be strangers to the love of Christ. Love, joy, and peace, are the first fruits of the Spirit, and therefore if God the Holy Ghost dwells in our hearts it seems clear that we must love Him, that we must rejoice in Him, and that we must be at peace resting in His grace. But, just in proportion as we set a high value on the religion of the heart, must we see the importance of a solid foundation of divine truth on which all true heart-religion must ever rest. We cannot build a house on the surface of a river. If we attempt to do so we shall very soon find ourselves at the bottom. So feelings are very apt to fail us just when we want them, if they are not the result of a fixed and solid acquaintance with the truth of God. If they do not spring from established principles they will rise and fall even with the digestion or the weather. It is, therefore, most important that in these happy days of Christian emotion we should have a good foundation of Christian truth, and should be well established in those great foundation facts on which, when all feelings fail us, our souls may rest, and be at peace.

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It is well, therefore, that our attention should be directed to the great foundation subject of Redemption. It is one on which everything else hangs, for if we do not understand redemption, we cannot possibly know the value of the Redeemer; and if we do not know the Redeemer, where will our feelings be when the time of pressure comes, and they are all pressed out of us by trial?

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There are three questions to be considered carefully at the outset of our study. What is meant by Redemption? How far is our redemption complete? And what is our present position? May God the Holy Ghost both direct and bless the words which shall be spoken!

I. What is meant by redemption?

On this subject I cannot help thinking that there is sometimes a good deal of confusion. People speak of it as if it were the same as ransom, propitiation, or atonement, whereas there is surely a great distinction between them. There cannot be a doubt that the two are very closely connected: but redemption in Scripture means much more than atonement, and always, or at all events generally, includes the idea of deliverance, or recovery. The word itself means to purchase back or to recover by purchase; which clearly implies both the payment of the price and the recovery of the purchased possession. If a man were a prisoner in a foreign land, and a ransom were demanded for his release, there would be two distinct acts necessary to his restoration; first the ransom must be paid, and next the dungeon must be thrown open, and the captive brought out as a freeman to his home. Now the first of these acts, viz., the payment of the ransom, represents atonement, the ransom price for the satisfaction of the law; but redemption includes the actual deliverance as well. It is the payment of the ransom, and also the actual liberation of the captive. When the four living ones, and twenty-four elders said (Rev. v. 9), 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,' they did not mean merely that He had shed His blood for them in atonement, but that He had actually gathered them out as a ransomed people, and brought them from their former captivity to their present joy; for they said, 'Thou 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.' Thus in the Old Testament the idea of deliverance is far more prominent than that of atonement. When it was written the doctrine of atonement was not fully revealed, but was wrapped in types and prophecies. But God's power in delivering was full in view, and it became the prominent object in the thoughts of the writers. Let us turn to a few passages in illustration. In Exod. vi. 6, we find God saying, 'I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments.' In Deut. vii. 8, Moses said, 'The Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.' In Jer. xv. 21, when predicting the future restoration of Israel, the Lord says by the prophet, 'I will deliver them out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem them out of the hand of the terrible.' In all these passages it is perfectly clear that 'to redeem' means 'to deliver;' and that when God said, 'I will redeem them,' He meant that He would set them free. And this is very clearly illustrated by the remarkable prophecy of Isa. lix. 20, when compared with the quotation of it, Rom. xi. 26. In the prophecy our Blessed Lord and Saviour is called 'the Redeemer,' but in the apostolic quotation 'the Deliverer.' The Redeemer is the Deliverer, for 'He gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world.'

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In the New Testament, however, there is a difference. When that was written the ransom price had been paid, for the Lord Jesus Christ had died; so that in it the atonement by the Son of God becomes more prominent than the deliverance. The blood of the Lamb is continually connected with redemption there, as for example in such a passage as Titus, ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;' and in the words just quoted from Rev. v. 9, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.'

But both Old and New agree in teaching that redemption is deliverance, or recovery, through a ransom or atonement. In both 'to redeem' combines the exercise of power with the satisfaction of every lawful claim. It consists of two parts, atonement and deliverance. Atonement, therefore, is a part of redemption, but not the whole. It is the first great act on which the subsequent deliverance depends, but it is not the deliverance. Through atonement the satisfaction is made for sin, and by virtue of that satisfaction we are set free; and that deliverance through atonement is the redemption of the Gospel.

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II. We may proceed, then, to our second question. How far is our redemption complete? And the answer to that question is, that of the two parts the one is complete, but not the other.

The ransom, or atonement, is complete, and there is no possibility of adding anything to that, as in the words of our Communion Service 'who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,' or, as in the words of Scripture, 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' That is done for ever and ever. All the masses of the Church of Rome, and all that men call sacrificial offering, can add nothing to it. All that they can do is to throw a shade over its glory. Two hundred million pounds were paid by conquered France as her ransom, and of what use would it now be if any patriotic Frenchman should endeavour to add to the security of his country by paying an additional five shillings to the Prussians? So when the precious life of the Son of God has been laid down as our ransom, and when God's covenant has been completely fulfilled, shall we now go and add to it—a mass?

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But the deliverance is not finished, and therefore in the sense of deliverance the redemption is not yet complete. The atonement was perfected on the cross, but the deliverance will not be perfected till the Advent. Thus there are many passages in which it is spoken of as still future. In St. Luke, xxi. 28, our Lord said, 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.' In Rom. viii. 23, those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit are described as waiting for 'the redemption of the body,' or, in other words, for the final deliverance of the body itself at the resurrection, *i.e.*, for the gift promised through the prophet Hosea, 'I will redeem them from death.' So in the Epistle to the Ephesians the saints are said both to have redemption, and to be looking for it. In chap. i. 7, they are described as having it. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace,' and in chap. iv. 30, as waiting for it, 'Ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.' The reason is that the atoning blood on which forgiveness rests has been long since shed, and the atonement perfected. He 'has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us.' But the final deliverance will not be complete till His return, when all God's elect from all ages and all countries shall be all gathered together in one, without a sorrow, and without a fear, without death, without sin, without even a temptation to mar their joy; one vast company ransomed by one atoning sacrifice saved by one perfect Saviour, inheritors of one glorious kingdom, and bound together in one heavenly fellowship in a blessed eternity of never-ending joy.

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III. What, then, is our present position? of course I mean the position of those that are really in Christ Jesus? I think this may be very well illustrated by the words of Moses, Exod. xv. 13: 'Thou in thy mercy hast led forth thy people whom thou hast redeemed.' Those people had been set free from Egypt, and therefore were said to be redeemed. They were already free, but they were not yet in Canaan, or nearly so. They had not yet reached 'his holy habitation.' But meanwhile they were in His hand, and they might be perfectly sure that He would guide them every inch of their way.

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Now that appears to be exactly our position. If we be in Christ Jesus we are already free. Our ransom has been paid, our atonement completed, and we are free. We are free from both the imputation and dominion of sin. From the imputation, because the curse is gone; and from the dominion, for we are not under the law but under grace. This part of redemption is not a future thing which we should be always seeking, and never finding; always praying for, and never enjoying; always aiming at, but never reaching. It is the present, blessed, sacred gift of every one of you that is in Christ Jesus. You are not like Israel in bondage in Egypt, nor even like Israel shut in by the rocks at Pi-hahiroth; but you are like Israel on the eastern bank of the Red Sea, with Pharaoh and his host sunk beneath the flood. The language of Scripture twice repeated is, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14.) Accept it then, and live in the joy of your new position. Rejoice in the freedom and give thanks for it. Let the past bondage be forgotten in the joy of the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free; and go forward with a thankful heart to please Him who has thus graciously broken your chain.

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(2.) But remember that you are not yet completely delivered. Moses was so sure that the people

would be brought to the holy habitation that he praised God for it as if it was already theirs, though they had many a long mile to traverse, and many a hard battle to fight, before they reached it. So you may be perfectly sure of it, for you are 'sealed unto the day of redemption,' and no one can break the seal. That day of redemption is perfectly sure to come, and you cannot be disappointed. But meanwhile you have a journey, and a fight. To say nothing of all that is around you, there are two things that you still carry within, viz. death and sin. There is death, yes! that very death that was overcome when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, still working secretly within you; and, if the day of redemption does not come first, perfectly certain to bring you to the grave. And there is sin, the deadly sin of your fallen nature, not yet removed, but ready to poison the very fountains of your soul. If you think you have done with either death or sin, you will be sorely disappointed before you have travelled far. Your final redemption is not yet completed. You are free from the curse, free from the condemnation, free from the slavery, but you have not yet reached home. You must not, therefore, lay aside your armour, nor must you be disheartened even if you meet with that which makes you groan, for we read in Rom. viii. 23, 'Even we ourselves,' which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, 'groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'

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(3.) But our delightful assurance is that all the while we are safe in our Redeemer's hand. He has delivered; He will deliver; and He is delivering. Or, if we take the word 'redeem' in its full sense, He has redeemed; He will redeem; and He is now redeeming. He has set us free by His finished atonement. He will set us free by His resurrection power; and He is now setting us free by the mighty indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. See, then, the unspeakable blessedness of such a text as that in Jerem. L. 34: 'Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of Hosts is his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause.' He is our Redeemer, for He has redeemed us by His blood: He is a strong Redeemer, for He is the Lord of Hosts: He is a gracious Redeemer, for He pleads for His people; and putting all together, He is a perfectly sure Redeemer, so we will trust Him never to leave us for a moment, till He give to every one of us a triumphant victory, and present us sinless and deathless before His glorious throne, saved by His grace, redeemed by His blood.

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II. ISRAEL.

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'Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments.'—EXOD. vi. 6.

'Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.'—EXOD. xv. 13.

THESE texts have a very important connexion with each other. The first contains God's promise when He appeared to Moses and promised deliverance to Israel. The second is part of the thanksgiving of Moses when the first portion of the promise had been fulfilled and Israel was free. 'I will redeem,' said God. 'Thou hast redeemed,' said Moses. Of course both passages refer to the deliverance from Egypt, and both show perfectly clearly that the word 'to redeem' means 'to deliver,' and not merely to make atonement, or satisfaction, for sin. They both, therefore, throw great light on the subject of redemption.

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We know, on the authority of the New Testament, that the redemption of Israel was typical of the great redemption of God's people. But for my own part, I believe that it was more than typical. I believe it is to be regarded as the first great act of God in the redemption of His people. Up to that time there had been no deliverance, or no redemption. This was the first redemption in history, the first act in the great series which will be finally completed at the Advent, when death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire. I believe this to be the reason why, at the commencement of it, God made Himself known by the name of 'Jehovah.' Many people think that the real meaning of that sacred name is 'Yahveh,' 'the coming one.' This 'coming one' appears to have been expected by Eve herself, and all the line of believing patriarchs had lived and died in expectation of His advent. But their hopes had not been realized, as the time had not come for the manifestation of His power. But when Israel was in the depths of his deep calamity, a bondsman in a foreign land and far away from home, then God appeared to His chosen servant whom He had raised up as His leader, and said to him, 'I am the Yahveh, the coming one;' and through him He promised to Israel, 'I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments.'

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If this be the case, it gives a peculiar interest to the narrative, because it shows that we are to regard this deliverance of Israel as the act of the pre-existent 'Coming One,' the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was not merely a type of the coming salvation; but it was wrought by the same person who is now saving us, so that we may see in it the actual commencement of the saving work of our own beloved Redeemer. It was both a type and a reality. It was a prophetic picture of what He was about to do, and at the same time the commencement of His work as the Deliverer. Let us, then, study it with care, and may He who has redeemed us by His blood teach us by His Spirit!

You will remember that we found in the previous lecture, that redemption is deliverance through ransom, and, therefore, consists of two parts—the saving act and the atoning blood, or, in other

I. The saving act, or the power.

In studying this we cannot do better than follow the guidance of Exod. vi. 6, where we learn that He saved them from their burdens, from their bondage, and from inextricable difficulties.

(1.) From their *burdens*. 'I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.'

There are many burdens that weigh heavily on man, so that St. Paul said, even when he was sealed by the Holy Ghost: 'We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened.' There are burdens on the strength when a man has to toil beyond his powers: burdens on the heart when we feel a weight of sorrow as we witness the sufferings of those we love: burdens on the thoughts when some heavy care rests upon us, and produces depression of spirits: and, above all, burdens on the conscience when the sense of sin troubles us, when we know we have been wrong, and when the present conviction of our own utter unworthiness weighs heavily on the heart.

These burdens come from many sources. Sometimes they are laid upon us by the providence of God, and sometimes they are of our own creation. For example, the great pain of the burden of sin is that we know it is our own fault, and, therefore, it involves the bitter pain of self-reproach.

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But some of these burdens are not always felt, or, if felt, not really cared for. People are ready to complain of them; but they are not really longing to be free. They are very much like Israel in Egypt. Israel groaned and grumbled, but yet when a deliverer came to them from God, they did not care to be delivered. Turn to their words of reproach which they spake to Moses when the Egyptians were pursuing them, Exod. xiv. 12, 'Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?' They groaned a great deal, but yet they wished to be let alone. They had no faith in delivering power, so they preferred to bear their burden rather than run any risk in their effort to be free. How many are there to this day just like them, who confess their burden, who lament their burden, who wish to be free of their burden, if they can be so without difficulty, but who yet, when you tell them of the saving power of the Lord Jesus reply in their hearts, 'Let us alone!'

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Now remember that our blessed Lord and Saviour is a Saviour from the burden, whatever the burden be. If He does not take it away He will give you power to bear it. He is the burden-bearer as well as the sin-bearer; and if He does not remove the burden He is sure to sustain you under it, for He has said, 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.' But He will one day remove the burden. This is what He did for Israel. He promised to 'bring them out from under their burdens,' and He did it, and we may trust Him to do the same by us. He will do it in His own time, and His own way. 'The time appointed may be long but the thing is true, and the day is coming when every burden will be gone for ever, and the most burdened heart amongst us will appear in perfect rest in the presence of the Lord.'

(2.) But He promised, also, to save them from their *bondage*. They were bondsmen in Egypt.

They were not freemen, as we are, but slaves. They were not free to choose their own master, or to come and go at their pleasure. They could not leave their homes without the permission of the king, for they were under a legal yoke. If they had no work to do, nor any burdens laid on them, they would still have been bondsmen. Moses was brought up in all the luxury of a palace; but still he was a slave. So, when God undertook to deliver, the first thing He did was to break the bondage of this legal yoke. He set them free that He might bring them out, and save them. So long as they were in bondage they could not move, so He broke the chain and they were free.

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Can anything be more complete as a type of what He does for us? Those whom God hath not set free are 'all their lifetime subject to bondage.' They are bound by what St. Paul describes, Rom. viii. 2, as 'the law of sin and death.' So long as the guilt of unforgiven sin rests on the conscience, they cannot be free. It matters not where they are or what they are doing. They may be bowed down by hard work, or living in ease and idleness; but in either case they are bondsmen, and they are condemned under the law, and bound by it. They cannot shake it off, or get clear of it, for it is a condemnation by God Himself, and they cannot break His chain. Indeed, their efforts to get free very frequently produce just the same result as the efforts of Israel did when they strove to get free from Pharaoh. The only result of their effort was that the burden became heavier, and the bondage more severe. How often is this the case with persons struggling to get free from the burden and bondage of sin! They try, and try again, and the only result is, that they get deeper into difficulty. They have at last to make their bricks without the straw, and seem worse off than ever. But then it is that the Redeemer appears, and says, 'I will rid them out of their bondage.' He has borne the burden, and having done so He breaks the yoke. He removes the imputation of sin, and when that is gone we are free, free to arise and follow Him; free to go forth to the promised land; free to walk fearlessly with God; free because 'Christ has made us free;' because 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death.'

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(3.) But once more; He delivered them from what, as far as man was concerned, were insuperable *difficulties*.

It is not an uncommon thing to meet with persons who really hope that they are delivered from the imputation of sin, and therefore free from the bondage of the law, who still feel the greatest difficulty in their progress in a Christian life. They really hope that a great change has taken

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place. They are in a very different position to what they once were. But still they cannot get on. It appears as if there was a barrier they could not pass. Their way is blocked by some besetting sin which they cannot overcome, and they are sometimes almost tempted to say that it was better with them before they began their struggle. Such a temptation is very wrong; but there is nothing new in it, for it is just what Israel felt when they found their way blocked by the Red Sea. They then said (chap. xiv. 12), 'It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.' They had been set free, but progress appeared impossible. Now let any one who thinks his own progress impossible look well at these facts. It was perfectly true that those people were hopelessly hedged in between the sea and Pharaoh's host. There was nothing that they could do to overcome their difficulty. But Jehovah had promised, 'I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm,' and the result was that when Moses stretched forth his rod, the sea itself opened to let them pass. Some excellent persons have endeavoured to explain this by supposing some remarkable combination of wind and tide. But we do not want the help of such explanations. It is better to accept it at once as a miracle that cannot be explained, a miracle wrought out by the strong arm of the Redeemer. And, remember, that it is the same strong arm which can deliver the very weakest amongst us from the greatest difficulties which ever yet beset the path of the Christian. You say, 'I cannot,' but He says, 'I can.' You say, 'I have tried; and it is impossible.' He says, 'With God nothing is impossible.' Never, therefore, again must you say, 'It cannot be.' If the Lord has set you free from the dreadful yoke of imputed sin; if the Redeemer Himself is leading you to the promised land, remember that your 'Redeemer is strong, the Lord of Hosts is His name;' and whatever be your practical, personal, peculiar difficulty, He is just as well able to overcome it as He was to divide the Red Sea: so that, trusting Him you may be delivered as Israel was delivered, and be enabled, with a thankful heart to say, 'Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people whom thou hast redeemed.'

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II. But we must not look only at the deliverance, for redemption means deliverance through ransom, or through blood, and we must not forget the ransom, or redemption price. What in this case was the ransom? It was not Pharaoh's host drowned in the Red Sea, for the bondage of Israel was broken before that event occurred. Nor was it the death of the first-born in Egypt, for that could not be regarded as the ransom of Israel, though I fully admit that it was closely connected with it. For my own part I believe it was the blood of the Paschal Lamb on the night of the Passover. But you may say what a little thing that was as the ransom of a nation! Perfectly true; but remember, it was a type. The whole transaction was a type. The people were a type; the deliverance was a type; and, therefore, it is only natural to expect that the ransom, too, would be a type. Now we learn that the Paschal Lamb was a type of our blessed Saviour, for we read, 1 Cor. v. 7, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,' and, therefore, as that paschal lamb was a prophetic picture of Him and His sacrifice, we can see in a moment how it was that it was the ransom price in the redemption of Israel. It was an antedating of the future sacrifice of the Son of God, and it, as it were, carried back the power of the great atonement, and applied it 1500 years before it happened to the redemption of Israel. I can see, therefore, perfectly clearly why the deliverance of Israel was called a redemption; for they were redeemed by the same ransom as we are even by the precious blood of Christ. It was shed, it is true, 1500 years after their deliverance, but even then it was prefigured and applied, and even then it was effectual. What, then, is our conclusion? Is it not surely this? If the burden of Israel was removed, the yoke of Egypt broken, the way opened through the Red Sea, and all through the type, may not we be perfectly sure that our burdens will be removed, our yoke broken, and our difficulty overcome through the effectual power of the reality? Look, then, at that most precious blood of Christ; look at Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world; look at Him as your ransom and Deliverer, and never again admit the thought that the yoke of sin's condemning power is too fast fixed ever to be broken, or the hindrances of sin's obstructing power too desperate to be overcome. But when you groan under the yoke let your heart rest in redeeming blood; and when you feel the difficulty of progress then look to redeeming power, so that the yoke being broken through the blood, and victory given by the power, you may go on your way with the song of Moses in your heart, 'The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.'

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III. THE FIRST-BORN.

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'But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.'—EXOD. xxxiv. 20.

MAN is a very forgetful being, and there is nothing which he seems to forget so much as mercy. It takes a great deal to make us forget a trouble, but very little to wipe away the thought of mercy. Thus when God has wrought great acts He has not unfrequently appointed memorials in order to keep them in remembrance, and has provided for the failure of man's memory by appointing something that may continually remind him of the past. Sometimes it has been a stone or monument, as, *e.g.* at the passage of Jordan, but more frequently it has been an institution, such as the Paschal Supper as a memorial of the Passover, and the Holy Communion, or the Supper of the Lord, in remembrance of His death and passion. These institutions have lasted much longer than the material monuments. The Paschal Supper lasted fifteen centuries, and the Lord's

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Supper has already lasted more than eighteen. It seems a very simple institution. What can be more simple than to partake together of a little bread and wine in thankful remembrance of His death? But it has never been forgotten by the people of God, and never will be till the Advent. Wherever Christ has been preached this memorial feast has been observed. In all ages and all countries it has been the joy of God's people. In all mission-stations as well as in our churches at home, always and everywhere, the sacred memorial has been reverently and lovingly observed by those who name the name of Jesus.

But besides the Paschal Supper there was another institution ordained as a remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt. For as Israel was delivered through the death of the first-born of the Egyptians, it was established as a law in Israel that all their first-born both of man and beast should be given up to God. The law is given, and the reason of it, in Exod. xiii. In v. 2, we find the law, 'Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast: it is mine;' and in v. 14, the reason, 'And it shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come saying, What is that? that thou shalt say to him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt from the house of bondage;' and in the 16th verse we are taught that it was for a perpetual memorial before God, 'And it shall be for a token upon thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt.'

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We are not told what was involved in this separation unto God of the first-born of the sons. Some think, and not without reason, that they were separated unto the priesthood, but on this we have no distinct information. One thing is clear, that in some peculiar manner they were the Lord's. In Exod. xxii. 29, 'The first-born of thy sons thou shalt give unto me.' So in Num. iii. 13, 'Because all the first-born are mine.' Was there not an allusion to this in Hannah's words when she said, 'I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life'? and was there not again a distinct reference to it in the presentation of our Blessed Saviour to the temple, as we read in Luke, ii. 23? In the case of Samuel and our Blessed Lord there was clearly a consecration to a special and exclusive service; so whatever was the precise form of separation, one thing is perfectly clear, that in a peculiar and especial manner the first-born were set apart unto God. There was a vast difference between God's ordinance and man's habit. It is a very common thing with man to devote the first-born to the world, and the second, third, or fourth son to the ministry; or, extending the principle, to consider that which is second in our own affections to be good enough for God. But He claims the first of all, that which is the first to bring joy to the mother's heart, and which is first to claim the mother's love; that which has for a time the concentrated interest of the only child. The Jewish parent was not to wait till he had many. It was when the mother had only one, that that one was to be given to God.

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But it is the redemption of the first-born which we are now to study. In this verse we are told, 'All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem.' According to the law there was a legal claim on every first-born, whether of man or animal, but still there was provision made in most cases for their redemption or release, and it is to this provision that I am anxious now to turn your thoughts.

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It differed in different classes.

For sacrificial animals, such as the sheep, or the goat, there was no redemption. They were all offered in sacrifice, Num. xviii. 17, 'But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the Lord.'

For other useful animals, such as the ass, there was redemption. The ass might be redeemed by a lamb, but if it was not redeemed, its neck was to be broken, Exod. xxxiv. 20. 'But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then thou shalt break his neck.' If redeemed, it was saved from death by substitution. It was redeemed by vicarious death. The lamb was the substitute for the colt, so the lamb died, and the colt was free. You see how the principle of substitution pervades the prophecies of the Jewish ritual.

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The same principle of substitution appears in the redemption of the first-born sons. But there is a marked difference between that made for them, and that for the animals, viz., that the law did not admit the idea of any such thing as human sacrifice, and therefore the sons were not like the animals subject to death. They belonged to God for service, not for death, and the redemption price was of the same character as the yoke from which they were redeemed. Thus you find the whole tribe of Levi given up as the redemption price of the first-born of the other tribes. The transaction is explained, Num. iii. 41. 'Thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the Lord) instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel.' Thus all the men amongst the Levites were numbered, and all the first-born amongst the other tribes, and by divine authority the Levites were solemnly given up as a substitute for the others, Num. iii 45: 'Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle: and the Levites shall be mine: I am the Lord.'

But here a difficulty arose, and it is one which teaches us the extreme danger of giving a typical authority to all the institutions of the Old Testament. There was clearly in this case the principle of substitution. The Levites were substituted for the first-born, and the first-born were free. The transaction was, therefore, an illustration of the work of the atonement. But yet if we were to regard it as a divine type of it we should be landed in a most dangerous and unscriptural conclusion, for in the case of the first-born the substituted gift was insufficient; so that if we were to call those Levites a type of the Lord Jesus, we might gather that His sacrifice was insufficient,

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and required something else as a supplement. Be very careful, therefore, how you call anything a type which is not declared to be one by God Himself.

When the Levites were numbered it turned out that there were only 22,000; but the number of the first-born males of the other tribes was 22,273. The substitution, therefore, fell short by 273 persons. It clearly, therefore, could be no type of the Lord Jesus, for there was no falling short in Him. The result was that a supplement was necessary. Five shekels of silver was to be added for each of the 273, and when that was paid the whole of the first-born were redeemed. This money payment afterwards became a permanent institution in Israel, and appears to have been continued long after the original transaction was complete. In Num. xviii. 16, we find the direction that 'all that are to be redeemed . . . shalt thou redeem . . . for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary.'

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Now in this Levitical picture there are many things that bear a close resemblance to the Gospel. There was a clear legal claim, and the remission of that claim by substitution, or the payment of a redemption price. And this may serve to illustrate the claim which the law has on us all, and the remission of the claim by the substitution of the Son of God. But, as I have already said, we must be very careful how we call it a type, for the contrasts are more remarkable than the resemblances. There are two points of contrast to which I would draw your most especial attention, points which I can scarcely doubt you have yourselves observed already.

In the first place, the freedom or the release bestowed on the first-born through redemption was the exact opposite of that bestowed on us through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. They were redeemed *from* God; but we are redeemed *to* God, as we read Rev. v. 9, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.' Before they were redeemed, all the first-born were the Lord's, and were enrolled as a separate people belonging in a special and peculiar manner to Him; so that He said of them, Num. iii. 13, 'All the first-born are mine.' The effect of the redemption was to put an end to this sacred relationship, and to place them on the same footing as the other members of the family. It released them from all that was involved in their being a peculiar people unto God. They ceased, in short, to be a peculiar people. Now this is the exact reverse of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The effect of His work is to call out a peculiar people unto God, and so separate us unto Himself, that He may say of us, as He said of the first-born, 'All are mine.' You remember how clearly this is put in Titus, ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us.' There is the redemption price, and the next clause teaches the object of it, 'that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Those, therefore, whom he has redeemed are purified as 'a peculiar people unto himself.' We are brought by redemption into the position from which the first-born were delivered. And I cannot help thinking that there is an allusion to this fact in that great description of the Christian's position in Heb xii. We there read, in ver. 23, that we are come 'to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven.' What is the meaning of that expression? Why are believers called the first-born, and why were their names thus written? Is it not because they are brought into the same peculiar relationship to God which was the inheritance of the first-born? Because, as the first-born were His own so are we? And because as they were enrolled as being His in the national register, so are we in the book of life? And is there any one amongst us that would wish to be free from that peculiarity? Is there one that has ever knelt down in the fulness of his heart and said, 'Lord, I am thine,' who would now rise up and say, 'But I wish to be thine no more'? Is there any one who has ever borne the yoke of the Lord Jesus who would now wish to throw it off, and be free? No, never! We wish to be free from all that keeps us back from Him; free from every weight and from the sin which doth so easily beset us: free from every temptation that tends to hinder us in His service. But free from Christ! Never, never, never! The desire of our heart is to be His altogether; His without reserve; His in the exercise of all our powers; His in life; His in death; His for eternity; His whatever may be given up for His service; His, so completely, so truly, so heartily, that we may be able to say in the sincerity of our souls, 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.'

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But there is another most marked point of contrast to which I have already alluded, but which we ought to consider more carefully before we close. There was an essential difference of character between the redemption price in the case of the first-born and in ours. In theirs there was no shedding of blood. There was substitution, but not blood-shedding. The life of the child was not forfeited to the law, so the life of the substitute was not taken in its stead. It was a gift of service for service, the service of the Levite for the service of the child. Then again it was a mixed, and composite substitution. The substitution of the Levites was insufficient, so the defect was made up by the 1365 shekels of silver. But in our case, as our lives were forfeited by sin, His life was given in our stead; and who shall say that it was insufficient? May we not rather say, 'She hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins,' for 'with Him is plenteous redemption?' We have no need to supplement His sacrifices by silver. It appears that St. Peter had reference to this very contrast and to those supplemented shekels, when he said, 1 Pet. i. 18, 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' Some people might possibly think more of redemption if the redemption price consisted of gold and silver, for they seem to care more for money than for the most precious blood of Christ; at all events, they appear to cling much faster to it. But what can money do for you when you are face to face with God? And what can man do for you when your conscience is bowed down by the weight of sin? No vicarious work of other men, and

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no gifts, however great, can set you free from the yoke and condemnation of the law. That will never enable you to say, as was said to me last week by one well known to many of you, 'The whole weight is gone.' No, indeed! All the Levitical service that conscientious men may offer to God, and all the accumulated wealth that the richest amongst us may tender as a redemption price, will all together utterly fail to take the weight from one sin-burdened soul. But the precious blood of Christ, of Christ Jesus the one divinely-appointed substitute, that is enough; enough, though quite alone, enough to redeem us from the whole curse, and to redeem us from it for ever, that so, by His boundless grace, we may be set apart as the first-born unto God, and live and die amongst those who are written in heaven.

IV. THE BONDSMAN.

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'After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him.'—Lev. xxv. 48.

OUR blessed Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' He did not come as a sweeping reformer to break down existing institutions, and sweep away the law of types; but He did come as the predicted Messiah, to fulfil the prophecies of those prophetic pictures, and to give a fresh dignity to the law in which they were embodied. In no instance, therefore, do you find Him violating the law. He swept away with a strong hand the vain traditions which men had added to it; but the law itself he always honoured, and His great complaint against the advocates of tradition was, 'Ye do make void the commandments of the law by your traditions.'

But it was not only in the practical details of life that He honoured the law, but in the whole great work of redemption. Every part of that wonderful work was an act of homage to the law. Not only did He obey it when He was come, but in the act of coming, or in other words, even in His incarnation, He showed His obedience.

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This will be easily seen if you study the law of redemption as laid down in this chapter. The law is here given respecting one who had sold himself to a stranger. How many are there who, like the bondsman, have sold themselves to sin! But we must not stop to dwell on that. The poor man had sold himself and was a slave. Till the year of jubilee nothing could release him but redemption. But who should pay the redemption price? that was the question. A stranger was not at liberty to do so. However kindly disposed he might feel, he had no right or power to interfere. According to this 48th verse, the Redeemer must be one of his brethren. 'One of his brethren may redeem him: either his uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family, may redeem him; or, if he be able, he may redeem himself.' The slave himself might redeem himself if he had the power to do so. But what hope had that slave of procuring his own ransom when all his powers and all his time belonged to another? Who then could redeem him? Who could set him free?

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The nearest of kin had the prior right, as we see in the case of Boaz and Ruth. But if he failed, the next in order of relationship might step in and take his place. But the redeemer must be a kinsman, and none but a kinsman could redeem. So closely are the two things identified, that redeemer and kinsman are both expressed by the same word in Hebrew. The same word stands for both, for the kinsman had the right of redemption, and the redeemer was obliged to have a blood relationship.

And now observe the manner in which our blessed Lord and Saviour obeyed the law.

We are all by nature in the position of the man that was sold. So St. Paul said of himself in his natural condition, 'I am carnal, sold under sin,' Rom. vii. 14; and therefore he described the law of evil within his nature warring against the law of his mind, 'and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members.' There was therefore a captivity resulting from the sale.

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But it is not only the original ruin of our human nature of which the expression is used in Scripture, for it is applied to the personal act of the individual sinner. Is there not an allusion to this very law in those passages which speak of persons having sold themselves? Ahab 'sold himself to do evil.' 1 Kings, xxi. 20. In 2 Kings, xvii. 17, the same is said of the children of Israel: 'They sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord.' In Isaiah, L. 1, there is a distinct reference to the sale to a creditor,—'Which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.' And in Isa. lii. 3, a clear allusion to the redemption of the slave, 'Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.' The sinner, therefore, is like the man who sold himself. He has yielded himself to be the servant of sin. He obeys it, and he does its work. If he wishes to get free he cannot. He may long for liberty, but he cannot attain it. He may think with bitter regret of past folly that has led to his ruin. But regret cannot restore. Remorse cannot set him free. A slave he is, and a slave, unless saved by redemption, he must remain.

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How, then, can such an one be redeemed? That is the question. It must clearly be by a redemption price. There was no redemption under the law without a ransom. In the case of the man who had sold himself, the price was the value of his service until the year of jubilee. In our

case it was infinitely higher, for the Lord Jesus gave Himself 'a ransom for all.' The sinner sold himself, and the Lord Jesus gave Himself as a ransom, and because He has done so, God said by the prophet, 'Ye shall be redeemed without money.'

But my object is to consider, not the ransom, but the Redeemer, and to examine who, according to the law, was qualified to redeem.

(1.) We cannot redeem ourselves.

It is clear that according to ver. 49, the slave, if he were able, might redeem himself. But it must have been very difficult for a slave, who had sold himself because he was ruined, to accumulate sufficient for his own redemption; and it is perfectly clear that it would be utterly impossible for us to accomplish any such redemption for ourselves. Multitudes have endeavoured to do so. They have striven to gain a freedom by tears and toils, and fastings, and almsdeeds, proportioned to the sin committed. But the only effect has been that the chain has been riveted more firmly than ever on their soul. Instead of providing a ransom they have daily increased their debt. And so it will ever be so long as man struggles to redeem himself. 'It cost more to redeem their souls, so they must let that alone for ever.'

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(2.) Then again, angels could not redeem us. Even if there had been any mighty archangel of such majesty as to produce a sufficient ransom, he would have been disqualified for the office, for the simple reason that he would not have been a kinsman. We know but little of the nature of angels, and we cannot realize a mighty spirit perfectly independent of the flesh. But this we know, that there is a clear and marked distinction between the nature of angels and the nature of man, for we read of our blessed Saviour, 'He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' Heb. ii. 16. The angels, therefore, are not our brethren. They are not kinsmen, and therefore were not qualified to redeem. Whatever benevolence they may have felt, and whatever compassion for us in our captivity, and whatever joy in our salvation, the whole host of angels and archangels were utterly disqualified to act as redeemers, and, whatever they offered, according to the law, they were unable to redeem.

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(3.) But still more. Even the Son of God Himself, in His eternal Godhead, could not redeem, for there lay against Him the same disqualification. He was eternal, above man, and of a nature altogether different. As the heaven is high above the earth, so is His nature above ours. It is high, we cannot attain unto it. In His divine nature, therefore, our blessed Lord Himself was not a kinsman, and therefore by law He could not be a Redeemer. He was not one of the brethren of the bondsmen, and therefore could not redeem; and, whatever love He felt for us, He was excluded, according to the law, from showing it in redeeming mercy.

And now you see the homage paid to the law in His incarnation. When He took on Him our nature He became a kinsman, and could redeem. See how clearly this is put in Heb. ii. 14. 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' He identified Himself with them in nature in order that, being their kinsman, He might have the right of redemption. He took not on Him the nature of angels, for that would not have established a relationship with man, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham, and so became one with the great human family. The Levitical law, ver. 48, was, 'One of his brethren may redeem him.' So to carry out His own most gracious purpose of mercy, He took our nature, He made Himself a brother, and according to the 11th verse of that chapter in the Hebrews, 'He is not ashamed to call us brethren.'

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Just the same truth is taught us in Gal. iv. In ver. 3, we are described as bondsmen: 'We were in bondage under the elements of the world.' And when our Heavenly Father in boundless love undertook to save, what did He do? He first prepared a qualified Redeemer, and then that Redeemer redeemed us by His blood. 'He sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law,' qualified therefore in all respects, because He was of the same family 'to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' He became a brother, and, being a brother, redeemed us by His blood. There was a double act of love and mercy: first, in assuming the relationship, and next, in availing himself of that relationship in stepping forth to pay the ransom for our release. Oh! who can tell the love of Christ? Who can sufficiently exalt His grace?

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But now what is the position of all those that are in Him? What is the position of all you who have redemption through His blood? You were bondsmen once; sold under sin: sold by the act of Adam, and sold by your own conduct afterwards. As St. Paul says, Rom. vi. 17, 'Ye were the servants' or the slaves 'of sin.' But what are you now? Are you still slaves? No. Those only who are strangers to salvation in Christ Jesus are slaves. But you are not, for you are free. Your kinsman has appeared and paid the redemption price; so you are free: as completely free as if you had never been in bondage. The moment that the kinsman paid the ransom, the slave was free. He was not required to stop and inquire whether he deserved it or no. He was not obliged to wait and look into his feelings, and ascertain whether he felt it or no. The ransom was paid, and he was free, so that he might go home with a thankful heart to show his deep gratitude to the kinsman who had paid it. So it is with you if you be in Christ Jesus. The creditor has no hold on you, for your kinsman has come forward, and the whole ransom is paid. You are as completely free as you will be if you wait a hundred years. You cannot add anything to the ransom, and there is no need that you should do so, for all is paid, and paid in full. You may dwell therefore in perfect peace in your Father's home, and with a thankful heart gather round your Father's table, in the peaceful enjoyment of your Father's fellowship, and your Father's love.

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But think how strange it would have been in olden times, if, when the kinsman had come forward and most kindly paid the redemption price, the poor bondsman had preferred captivity, and refused the liberty thus freely purchased for him by his brother. Such things apparently did happen sometimes, though they appear to us almost impossible; for, in Exod. xxi. 5, the servant is described as plainly saying, 'I love my master . . . I will not go out free,' and, when he said that he was taken to the door-post, and his ear was bored through in token that he was a slave for life. I do not know whether that often happened in ancient days, but I fear it is a very common occurrence now. The Son of God has become a kinsman on purpose to redeem, and as a kinsman has redeemed us by His blood. He has come to the master, and having broken all his legal power, has proclaimed liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; but there sits the slave, content in his slavery, and plainly says, 'I love my master; I will not go out free.' How many are there even amongst ourselves thus indifferent to liberty! They know there is a deliverer; they have heard it: they have read it: they believe it. They know their kinsman has paid the ransom, so that, according to the covenant, they may be free. But they love the old sins, and the old ways, and the old habits, and they have no wish to be set free. They like the old associations, and a change of heart might cause a separation from their wives and their children, so they had rather go on as they are, the slaves of sin, the bondsmen of their own corruption. Is it unjust that such persons should never be set free? If the bondsman of old deliberately went to the door-post that his ear should be bored, was it unjust that he should be bound a slave for ever? and if any one of us with the grand offer of the freedom of the Gospel fully before him, prefers his bondage and will not accept the purchased freedom, is it unjust that that man should remain a miserable slave? Oh, that I could persuade those who have thus far been sitting still content with their captivity, to accept the freedom which their kinsman now offers them, so that henceforth we may change our note, and instead of saying, 'The ransom is paid, come home and enjoy your freedom,' we may say to them in the full enjoyment of their Father's loving home, 'Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.'

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V. RUTH.

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'And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance; redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.'—RUTH, iv. 6.

It has been my sacred privilege to speak lately more than once on the great subject of redemption as taught in the Old Testament, and the last time I did so I directed your attention to the law of redemption, as laid down in the book of Leviticus. But that law conveys a very imperfect idea of the redemption by our Lord and Saviour. In some respects there is a remarkable agreement, but the type falls utterly short of the reality. Let me mention a single instance. If the kinsman came forward to redeem either the person or property of the debtor, the effect of that redemption was to restore the ruined man to his liberty and his home. The forfeited property was restored, and the bondman became free; but there it stopped. The poor man was no better off after redemption than he was before he was sold. All that redemption did for him was to restore him to his original position. Here, then, you see in a moment the enormous difference between this Levitical redemption and the blessed work of our most blessed Saviour. He raises man by redemption to a position far above his position before the fall. Adam in Paradise had nothing to compare with the sacred inheritance of the saints of God in the kingdom of our Lord. Man, as represented in Adam, was far below the angels; but as redeemed in Christ Jesus, the second Adam, is high above them. Man in Adam had his inheritance on earth, but redeemed man in Christ Jesus is made heir to an 'inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.'

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This point is very well illustrated by the case of Ruth. The history of Ruth is not unlike that of Joseph—a remarkable illustration, though never declared to be a type. We may, therefore, accept the illustration, though we must not ascribe to it a divine, or typical, authority.

Turning to chapter i., we find that Elimelech, a man of Bethlehem, had property in Bethlehem-judah, and in consequence of famine and subsequent poverty, had emigrated with his wife and two sons to Moab. When there, both his sons married, but before there was any family born to either of them, both they and their father died. The three women, therefore, were left widows, and the famine having abated, Naomi decided to return. She appears to have gone back to the old home at Bethlehem, but said that her name should be no more Naomi (pleasant), but Marah (bitter), for the old house had lost its joy. After her return she struggled on, with Ruth as her companion. At length Boaz, the great man of the neighbourhood, 'a mighty man of wealth,' became acquainted with their circumstances, and most kindly interested himself in their condition. Being related to Elimelech, he was prepared to step in, and act the part of a kinsman, by redeeming the property from sale. But in this there was a difficulty, for he was not the next of kin, and therefore had no right to redeem (ch. iii. 12). But when he who was next of kin heard of it, he declined to act, as he could not undertake the burden. Boaz, therefore, undertook to pay the redemption price himself. Is there not a remarkable illustration there of the sacred work of our Kinsman, for when all others failed, though bound by no responsibility, He freely undertook to redeem us Himself? Thus the price was paid, the property was redeemed, the family inheritance was preserved, and it is not at all improbable that it was in that very farm that Jesse

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lived, and David spent his boyhood.

But I do not want to dwell on the property, but rather to draw your attention to the case of Ruth. It was the stipulation of the covenant that Boaz should redeem all that belonged to Elimelech and his sons, and therefore he was to receive with the property the widow of the deceased Mahlon. It was a strange law that gave him such a power, or rather imposed on him such a duty. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has raised the marriage-tie to a sacred position, which would render any such regulation quite impossible now. But it was the law in the time of Boaz, and he acted on it when he redeemed the land.

But now I want you to observe carefully the result.

If the famine had not reduced Elimelech to poverty, and so compelled him to emigrate to Moab, he and his sons would have remained in humble life on their property at Bethlehem, and as for Ruth she would have dwelt unknown in the mountains of Moab. The famine, therefore, was the first link in the chain. God's links are often very different to man's plans. But after Naomi's return, it is clear that she and her daughter led a struggling life, and were reduced so low that their property was advertised for sale. If all had gone well with them, they would apparently have been just able to live, and as it was, they were very glad of kind and generous help. But now observe the effect of redemption, and see how it raised Ruth above the position which either she herself, or the family of Elimelech, had occupied before the time of their distress.

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There are two things to be noticed.

(1.) She became the bride of the man who had redeemed her. Before the redemption he was kind to her, and gave her six measures of barley into her veil. But by virtue of the redemption he made her his own, received her to a share of all he had, and bound himself to her by the sacred tie of a life-long affection. Now have we not here a remarkable illustration of the blessed truth that by redemption we are raised to a position incomparably higher than that from which man originally fell? The Church of God is not like the young gleaner receiving a few shekels of barley as a generous gift; but by redeeming blood it is raised into the position of the Bride of the Lamb, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Look at the description of this union as the result of redemption in Eph. v. 25: 'Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.' If, therefore, we have redemption through His blood, we are not merely permitted to glean behind His reapers, but we are brought into a relationship the most sacred and intimate that it is possible for the human heart to imagine. We live in His presence, we are made partakers of His kingdom, we may rest in His love. His promise is, 'As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' And even when we are most deeply and painfully humbled at our own shortcomings, and at the sad coldness of our own hearts, we may think of Him not only loving us, but rejoicing in His love, admitting us to the most sacred confidence, and permitting us with the holy intimacy of a reverent affection to pour out our whole heart before Him. If, then, it were an elevation to Ruth to become the bride of the 'mighty man of wealth,' oh, what an honour is it for such as we are to be clothed with the white robe of His spotless righteousness, to be called by His grace into fellowship with Himself, to be loved by Him with an everlasting love; and, finally, presented to Him in spotless holiness to be one with Him for ever! How infinitely higher this is than anything enjoyed by Adam before the fall!

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(2.) But this was not all, for by the act of redemption Ruth was brought into a special relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In the genealogy of our blessed Saviour there are only three women mentioned, one of whom was Ruth. I have no doubt in my own mind that this narrative was written, and preserved in the canon of Scripture, to prepare the way for that mention of Ruth in the genealogy; for I believe that the great object of the Old Testament is to trace the sacred line that terminated in the birth of the promised seed. The whole history follows that line, and all collateral branches are passed by without any special record. By the act of redemption, Ruth was bought into that sacred or royal line: she became the one woman of her generation that was lineally connected with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesse, the father of David, was her grandson, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, was her seed. She was therefore brought by the act of redemption into union with Him, and so are we. Of course there is a vast difference between the two forms of union. She was the mother, we the children. He drew His human life from her, we receive our divine life from Him. In her case it was the tie of parentage or motherhood; in ours that of sonship. He was the promised Seed in which all nations of the earth are blessed; and as such He was her seed, and our Saviour. But though there was this marked distinction, in both cases redemption led to union; and if it were an honour to Ruth to be in the chosen line from which He sprang, is it not indeed an honour to such as we are to be admitted amongst the chosen family who are blessed in Him? Remember the words of the Apostle connecting sonship with redemption, Gal. iv. 4: 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' The effect of redemption therefore is so to identify us with the Son of God that we ourselves in Him become sons. We are redeemed from the curse and made one with the Son of God, so that we may go in before the God of glory, and there cry Abba, Father. Ye then, who have redemption through His blood, accept your position, and be not afraid of claiming your union. As Ruth was brought into the same line of parentage, so are you into that of sonship. Act, therefore, as sons. Speak to your Father as your Father. Abide in Him: walk in Him: live in Him: trust in Him: undertake nothing independently of Him; and God grant that you may be preserved

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in Him till the great presentation day, when in Him you will be presented spotless before His throne!

But we have not yet done with Ruth. You see clearly that just as we are raised by redemption to a condition infinitely higher than that of Adam before the fall, so Ruth was raised by redemption to a position incomparably higher than that of Elimelech's family before the famine. But we must look at her own previous condition, for it was far below the original condition even of Elimelech. He was one of the seed of Abraham, a member of the covenant, a proprietor in the promised land. But she was a poor heathen girl on the mountains of Moab, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger from the covenant of promise. Yet that poor heathen girl was raised by redemption to a higher position than all the Jewesses in the whole family of Elimelech. Does it not teach us the power of redemption to break down every barrier, to overturn every human calculation, to clear away every hindrance, and to raise to the most glorious exaltation those very persons whose case to man's eye seems hopeless? Doubtless there were noble women in Bethlehem who would have been glad enough to have been brought into the sacred line of the motherhood of the Coming One. But the honour was given through redemption to the poor young widow from Moab. So there may be many Englishmen, familiar with the words of the covenant, and living, as it were, within religious boundaries, but still strangers to real fellowship with God; while others, far away in heathen lands, in India, in Africa, in China, are brought in through the power of redeeming blood, and made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. So, again, there may be many amongst us at home who seem as far off as that young woman was when she was growing up an idolater in Moab; but the lesson that we are to learn is that there is such a fulness in redemption, such a power, such a completeness, such an efficacy that that far-distant sinner, even though he has been an idolater; though he can never forgive himself, may be forgiven by God; and not forgiven only, but raised by infinite grace even to a oneness with the Son of God. Let no one, therefore, feel hopeless, whatever his position, and whatever his past idolatry; for redeeming blood can triumph over everything, and can so blot out all sin that those who are the farthest off of any amongst us may yet be made nigh by the blood of Christ, and finally presented spotless before His throne.

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But one word more about Ruth, for if we really desire thus to be made nigh, her words to Naomi may serve to illustrate the spirit in which we must come to the Lord Jesus. If we were to call this a type such an application of them would lead to nothing but confusion. But looking at it simply as a piece of history they may suggest a most important illustration. She said to Naomi, 'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' If you desire to be made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus kneel down, and from the bottom of your heart say the same to Him. You may be still far away from God, a stranger in a strange land. But there is He, having come amongst us to fetch you home, to seek you, to save you, to raise you to Himself. Let there be then the loving surrender of your whole soul into His hand; and let the prayer of your inmost heart be, 'Whither thou goest, I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'

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VI. THE SPIRIT.

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'Into thine hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.'—Ps. xxxi. 5.

It is a very happy thing for the Church of God that David's life was chequered by trials, and his character by no means free from fault. If he had never been in difficulty, we should never have been taught how difficulty drove him to his God; and if he had been a man without sin, we should not have had from him any lessons on repentance as we now have in his penitential psalms. To his difficulties we are indebted for the 31st psalm, and to his sins for the 51st. For this 31st psalm, 'Trust in difficulty' would be a suitable heading. It opens with the words, 'In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust;' and after referring to many sources of anxiety, it concludes with that noble appeal to all believers, 'Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.'

But I am not about to attempt any examination of the whole psalm, but simply to draw your attention to this one sacred verse, and to the spirit of confiding trust expressed in it. In the study of it we will examine, first, the trust, then the redemption which was the foundation of it. May God teach us so to realise the plenteous fulness of that redemption that we may be always able in confiding faith to exercise the trust!

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I. The trust

This is expressed in the words, 'Into thy hand I commit my spirit.' There are few words in the whole word of God, presented to us with more sacred authority than these, for they were quoted by our Lord Himself even on the cross, and were almost the last words uttered by Him before His death. We must therefore approach them with a hallowed sense of profound reverence, and remember that the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

That use of them by our Blessed Saviour shows that they express the confiding trust of a dying

believer, that the trust is a death-bed trust, and one especially prepared for that solemn moment when we come to the threshold of eternity, and, leaving all below, are just on the point of entering alone into the unseen world. Let no one think lightly of such a moment, or suppose that because there may be perfect peace there is no deep solemnity in the approaching change. There is an inexpressible solemnity about it, and it is only the foolhardy man that will ever brave it unprepared. But the words of this text are exactly suited to the well-prepared believer. He has reached the point when friends can do no more for him. The faithful wife can accompany him no further; the loving child can no longer minister to his comfort; every human help utterly fails; and the dying man is left alone with God. But his Blessed Father is at his right hand, and can reach his soul even when men think he is unconscious; so that, even at that moment when to the eye of man there is nothing but weakness, confusion, and failure, the trusting heart, in the inner secrets of the soul, can lean on the Beloved, and say, 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.' This is what our Lord did just as he was dying; this is what Stephen did when he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;' and this is what I hope each of us may be able to do when the time of our departure is come, and the curtain which separates earth from heaven is being drawn aside to let us pass.

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But I do not think that death is the only occasion on which we may use these words, or that we are to lay them by unused till we require them in our dying hour; for, as far as we can gather from the psalm, they are to have a present life-use likewise. The psalm is not a death-bed psalm, but one composed under difficulties. Nor did David write it under any expectation that he would be overpowered by these difficulties, for in verses 2, 3, and 4, he prays for deliverance; and in verse 8 he expressly declares, 'Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.' We must, therefore, regard these words as spoken by one who was in difficulty, and being in difficulty, availed himself of the privilege of committing all his difficulties into his Father's hand. But you will observe that in this verse he does not speak so much of his difficulties as his spirit. He does not say, 'Into thy hand I commend my difficulties,' but 'Into thy hand I commend my spirit.' He may in those words have prayed for the preservation of his life, but I think it was rather the preservation of his own spirit, what St. Paul describes 'the spirit of the mind,' for which he required help. We all know how the spirit is harassed, and the rest of the soul disturbed, when we are placed in circumstances of perplexity. At such times we are often distracted in prayer, and are so much occupied by the things that trouble us that we are tempted to forget our resting-place. Hence the importance of especial prayer, not merely that difficulties may be overcome, but that our own spirit may be kept unruffled and undisturbed in perfect peace reposing on the Lord. This is just what David did in the psalm. He earnestly prayed that he might be delivered. 'Deliver me in thy righteousness.' 'Deliver me speedily.' He earnestly sought God's guiding hand, in order that in his own conduct he might do God's will: 'For thy name's sake lead me and guide me.' And meanwhile he trusted his own spirit, his mind, his thoughts, his temper, his whole man into his Father's keeping, and said, 'Into thy hand I commit my spirit.'

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II. But now let us turn to that redemption which was the foundation of his trust. He did not trust without a reason, but said, 'Into thy hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth;' and we have to consider what he meant by that expression, 'Thou hast redeemed me.' In answer to this question, I have no hesitation in expressing my firm conviction that the redemption to which he referred was precisely the same as that on which we ourselves rest, the redemption from the guilt of sin wrought out by the Lord Jesus on the cross. There has never been any other redemption which could be the foundation of trust either in life or in death; and when we find the blessing of the Gospel connected in the Old Testament with redemption, we have no choice but to believe that the redemption with which they are connected is that great redemption by the Lord Jesus on which all our own hopes exclusively depend. Take, for example, such words as those of David, in Ps. cxxx. The great subject of that psalm is forgiveness: 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared' (ver. 4); and the reason why Israel is to hope for it is that 'with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.' What but the redemption through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus can be described as thus plenteous for all who need forgiveness? The same may be said of those words of God Himself in Isa. xlv. 22: 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.' He cannot refer in those words to any deliverance that had already taken place, for he is only inviting the sinner to return; but he clearly refers to the blotting out of the curse through atoning blood, and to the way of life laid open to the returning sinner. So I cannot doubt for a moment that redemption in this verse means exactly the same as in both those passages. In Isaiah God said, 'I have redeemed thee;' and in this verse David said, 'Thou hast redeemed me.' The one gives, the other accepts; but they both speak of the same thing, the redemption on the cross, the only satisfaction for sin. Thus our blessed Lord, when He quoted the words, omitted this latter clause. He said, 'Into thine hands I commit my spirit;' but he did not say, 'For thou hast redeemed me.' The reason of this is obvious, for God had not redeemed Him, and He Himself was at that very time engaged in completing the redemption by His death. He could not use the words, for they referred to that great act of mercy in which at that very time He was engaged.

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But it may be said, If the redemption here spoken of was not to take place for more than a thousand years after the psalm was written, how was it that David spoke of it as a completed thing? Why did he not rather say, 'Thou art about to redeem me?' In answer to that question, two reasons may be given, either of which would be quite sufficient to explain his words.

(1.) The redemption was already complete in the eternal purpose of God. Remember those

words by St. Peter (1 Pet i. 19, 20): 'Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ . . . who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you;' and remember how he is described (Rev. xiii. 8) as 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' Although, therefore, the Son of God has not yet become incarnate, God speaking of His divine purpose could say, 'I have redeemed thee;' and His believing servant, referring to that same purpose, could reply, though a thousand years must pass before he witnessed it, 'Thou hast redeemed me.'

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(2.) But it was not purposed only, for it was promised. It was promised to our first parents the very day of their miserable fall, and it was kept continually before the eye of God's people by a series of types and prophecies. Thus David's language is an illustration of the words, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.' What God had promised was as sure to him as if he held it in his hand; it was as much his own as if he had seen it. He was as sure of the power of the cross of Christ, as if he had been standing by, and had heard the centurion say, 'Verily this was the Son of God.' And is it not apparent from the verse itself that this is the real meaning of his words? for what is the peculiar force of those concluding words 'O Lord God of truth?' Do they not teach us that he was assured of that redemption, not because it had seen it accomplished, but because it was made sure by the truth of God? The truth of God was pledged to the redeeming work and therefore that work was as sure to him as if it were already finished. He did not, therefore, wait to puzzle his mind about times and seasons; he knew that God was true to His promise, and therefore being assured of His declared purpose, he said, 'Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.'

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But if this be the case, we are surely brought to the conclusion that, whatever be our position, redeeming grace must be the one foundation of believing trust. Patriarchal faith looking forward, and modern Christian faith looking backward, both meet in one point, that point being the cross of Christ. And as for ourselves it matters not what are our peculiar circumstances. We may be actively engaged in the work of life, involved in its perplexities, and compelled to take a part in its struggles; or we may be at the end of life, expecting in a day or two to depart hence, and be no more: but in either case we must rest simply on the atoning blood, and resting on it, whether it be for life or for death, we may say in calm, quiet, peaceful, trusting faith, 'Into thy hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.'

But while we trust the perfect work we must not forget the perfect truth, for we are quite as dependent on that truth as David was. To his mind that had turned a future act into a present reality, and on that same truth we rely in order that the same act, long since completed, may be to us a present salvation, and the assurance of it a present power. We want each one to look back to the cross as David looked forward to it, and to say in happy, peaceful, personal trust as he did, 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me.' But in order to do this we must not forget the truth. We cannot rest on the work without the word any better than on the word without the work. It is when both are combined, and both applied by the Holy Ghost to the soul, that we can say, 'Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth,' and resting on those eternal counsels, whether living or dying, may trust Him without a fear.

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May we not then, every one of us, learn a lesson of simple trust from these few words in David's psalm? It matters not what is our position. When we are dying men and drawing near to the gateway of eternity we may calmly look up, and trust our soul for all eternity into His hand. If we be exposed to harassing anxiety, and are anxious about our own temper and judgment in difficult circumstances, we may spread our own spirit in simple faith before the throne. Or if we are undertaking work, and endeavouring to be employed for God, feeling the need of wisdom, zeal, love, and power, we may commit it all into His loving care. Yes, whatever it is that weighs on our mind, death, anxiety, disappointment, or duty, we may trust it all, and, whatever it is, may say as St. Paul did, 'I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' Yes; and He is perfectly sure to keep it safe.

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But there is one little word in the text that I have not noticed, and yet it is an essential one to the trust. Great principles are often found in little words, and so it is here, for all hangs on that little monosyllable 'me.' If you can only say, 'Thou hast redeemed mankind,' your soul will never rest in abiding trust. Nor will it if you can only say, 'Thou hast redeemed thy Church,' for the safety of the Church does not secure the peace of the individual. It is only when you can reverently look up to the atoning blood, and say, 'Thou hast redeemed *me*,' that you will be able in hallowed peace to commit everything into His loving hand. When you can say with deep thanksgiving, 'In whom *I* have redemption through his blood,' you may then without the shadow of a doubt commit your body, your soul, your spirit, your will, your thoughts, your work, and all you care for, into His loving hand.

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VII. ANATHOTH.

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'Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.'—JER. xxxii. 7.

THE Old and New Testaments are so linked together that they cannot well be separated. The Old

is the foundation of the New; the New is the head-stone of the Old; and the same great principles run through them both. Thus faith in the Old Testament is the same in principle as faith in the New; and by studying the faith of the ancient patriarchs and prophets we may learn most important lessons respecting that of the modern believer. In different ages and different persons faith may differ in its object and in its form; but it is always the same in principle, and always involves the fixed assurance that what God has promised He is able and certain to perform. This is very clearly seen in the deeply important lesson of practical faith conveyed to us in this history of Jeremiah. The events described in the chapter took place during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah was then king, and was struggling to the utmost of his power against the powerful enemy that was come up against him. In the midst of the siege the Prophet Jeremiah was employed to convey a most discouraging prophecy, for, as you read verse 3, Jeremiah said, 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city unto the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it.' Of course such a prophecy was calculated to dishearten the defenders of the city. So, though it was the word of the Lord, Zedekiah arrested the prophet and shut him up in the court of the prison. Jeremiah, therefore, was in a position of great distress, the city was besieged, and he knew from his own prophecy that it would be taken; while he himself was a prisoner at the mercy of a bad and arbitrary king.

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But while he was there alone in his prison the word of the Lord came to him saying that his first cousin, by name Hanameel, would come unto him and say, 'Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.' You will remember that we found the nearest of kin had the right of redemption, and evidently Jeremiah stood in that position to his cousin. As famine and pestilence were raging in the city (see ver. 24), it is easy to understand why Hanameel was compelled to sell. But he could not sell to any one, for the right of redemption belonged to Jeremiah. The prophet, therefore, was warned by the Lord that Hanameel was coming to him with this object; and accordingly he very soon appeared as was foretold, and said, 'Buy my field I pray thee that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of redemption is thine; buy it for thyself,' ver. 8. You must not fail to notice the confirmation of his faith through this fulfilment of the prophecy, for when Hanameel came to him he said, 'Then knew I that this was the word of the Lord.' Till then he was probably not quite satisfied, but when his cousin came as it had been foretold, then he knew it was of God. Let us learn a lesson for ourselves. There were many prophecies of a coming Saviour scattered throughout the four thousand years that preceded His birth, and I can perfectly understand the difficulty of faith in those who did not see those prophecies realised; but now that the Promised One has come according to His promise, and the great prediction has been fulfilled, the least that we can say is, 'Now we know that this was the word of the Lord.'

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But to return to Jeremiah. Being convinced that the whole thing was of God, he proceeded at once to redeem the field. He took care that the deeds were properly drawn, signed, sealed, and witnessed. And when the money, seventeen shekels of silver, was paid, and the conveyance complete, he trusted the deeds to Baruch, his faithful friend, and charged him to deposit them safely in an earthen vessel. His words were, 'Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel that they may continue many days.' You will observe that last clause, 'that they may continue many days.' He seemed quite sure that it would be a long time before they would be wanted.

Thus the transaction was complete, and the land redeemed; but not so Jeremiah's part respecting it, for when he had delivered the evidence of purchase unto Baruch, his next act was to kneel down in prayer. He says, ver. 16, 'I prayed unto the Lord.' I have not time now to study either his prayer or God's answer to it; I would only remark in passing what a blessed thing it is when all that we do is of such a character that we can pray about it before God. It would wonderfully alter the character of commercial life if every bargain could be spread in prayer before God, and if every contract were of such a nature that as soon as it was complete we could kneel down and ask God's blessing on it. I am inclined to think that this principle would knock off a great many of the hard bargains made in life. It would certainly prevent all cases of fraud and adulteration, and put a stop at once to the whole principle of the non-payment of lawful debts. Jeremiah, when he would redeem the land, first paid the money, and then knelt down to pray.

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But that is not the point to be particularly noticed in the passage, for we must rather study the mind of Jeremiah, and consider on what principle he redeemed the field. Why was it that, when he knew the city was about to be taken, and everything within it was already at famine prices, he apparently threw away these seventeen shekels in the purchase of a field which to all appearance he was never likely to possess? He knew perfectly well that at the time he purchased it it could be of no use whatever. It is believed to have been about three miles north of Jerusalem, and was probably at that very time trampled down by the besieging host, and he knew equally well that till after the restoration of the Jews he was not likely to attain possession. The city was invested by the Chaldeans, and there was not the smallest hope of a successful resistance; why then at such a time should he spend money in the redemption of the field? I believe that there were three principles on which he acted,—obedience, faith, and confidence in the law of redemption, and that he was called to do what he did in order to teach these principles to his besieged fellow-countrymen.

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(1.) There was clearly obedience, simple obedience in direct opposition to human calculation. You may see this very clearly in the concluding words of his prayer. It is clear from ver. 24 that all human calculation was against him, and he knew it to be so, for he said, 'Behold the mounds,

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they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence; and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it.' But the Lord had commanded him to buy the field, for he adds, ver. 25, 'And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses: for' (or rather 'though,' according to the margin) 'the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.' God told him to buy it, *though* the city was given up to the Chaldeans. He was not, therefore, to be guided by what he saw, but by what he knew to be the will of God. If he were to lose all his money, and never come into possession of the field, it was his clear duty to obey. And so it is ours, when once we are convinced of the will of God.

(2.) But as believers in the Lord Jesus we are not called to obey without hope, for where there is no hope you will never find power. The Christian's obedience, therefore, is full of hope, because it is all founded on faith, and so was the obedience of Jeremiah. He acted in faith, firmly trusting the promises of God. You see this very clearly in his words to Baruch when he handed him the deeds, as recorded ver. 15: 'For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.' He looked, therefore, beyond the present distress, and, more than that, beyond what I may term the first future. He foresaw the overthrow, but he looked beyond it to the recovery. He himself predicted desolation, but he was so sure of the restoration that on the strength of that assurance he redeemed the land. Though he saw the army of the Chaldeans around the city, though he was at that very time in prison for prophesying, 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it,' yet he was so sure of the truth of God's promise to restore it, that he acted on the promise, and purchased the property. He looked beyond the captivity to the recovery, and confidently acted on God's promise. That he fully realised the difficulty is clear from the words of his prayer, in which he said, ver. 17, 'There is nothing too hard for thee,' and from God's reply to these words in ver. 27, 'Is there anything too hard for me?' But he was, like Abraham, fully persuaded that what God had promised 'He was able also to perform,' and therefore he acted on the promise? and paid down his money in the certainty that God would fulfil His word. Dear brethren, is there not a noble lesson here for all of us? Are we not all taught, not merely to believe, but to act on our belief? We may see difficulties thickening around us; we may even see prophecies of sore trial in the latter days. But we know that our God shall trample down Satan under our feet shortly. We are to trust Him, therefore, and act on our trust. We see things decaying around us; we look at our own frail bodies, and believe that they will soon be laid lifeless in the grave. We see death cutting down our dearest friends, and we know that, if the Lord does not come first, it will soon cut us down too. But we look beyond to a resurrection, to the certain promise that we shall rise again; and therefore now we must live and act as those who are sure of the resurrection life. To adopt the figure of the narrative, we must purchase the field with a view to the restoration. There may be dark days and sore trials before the time of possession; but it is certain to come at last. As Daniel said, 'The thing is true though the time appointed is long.' So we know the premise is true, though the time of waiting may be long; and we must spend our whole life, and lay out all our powers, with the one fixed object of a certainty of possession when the dead shall arise, and the Lord shall take the kingdom.

(3.) But besides faith in the promise of God there was also confidence in the validity of the act of redemption. There was no doubt about the soundness of his title. The whole transaction was according to law. Hanameel had a legal right to sell, Jeremiah a legal right to redeem, and the conveyance was legally completed. All was done that was required by the law of transfer, and when those deeds were carefully deposited in the earthen vessel, there to continue for many days, Jeremiah clearly considered that whenever the time of restoration should come, the deeds would be recognised as valid, and his title as sufficient. He regarded the act of redemption as sufficient security whenever God should restore the land to Israel. And now, dear brethren, have we not all a magnificent lesson to learn from his example? We are looking forward to the times of restoration: we expect to rise again; we fully believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will come bringing His saints with Him, and, like Jeremiah, we depend on the finished act of redemption, as our own title to a share in the coming inheritance. Now look at that great act of redemption. There was no flaw in any part of it, for the whole law was fulfilled. The full price was paid, for we may adapt the words of the prophet, 'She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.' The redemption price was not seventeen shekels of silver; but the most precious blood of the Son of God. The Redeemer is not a mere man, a prisoner in the dungeon of the king; but the Son of God already risen from the dead, and already seated at the right hand of the throne. And the deeds are not deposited in any earthen vessel, or trusted to the care of such a man as Baruch; but they are treasured up in heaven itself, kept safe in the eternal counsels of Jehovah. And now follows the question, was that redemption by the Son of God sufficient? And are these title-deeds secure? If Jeremiah could trust to those sealed documents in the earthen vessel under Baruch's care, may we not trust to the full satisfaction made through redeeming blood, and the perfect security of the covenant of God as sealed, ratified, and preserved by Jesus Christ Himself? Of course when persons have no interest in that redemption, when they have no part in that redeeming work, we cannot then say that their title is secure, for, poor people! they have neither title nor inheritance; they have no hope in the restoration as they are without God in the present. Oh! that I knew how to persuade such persons never to rest till they have their title-deeds to a heavenly inheritance. But I am not speaking of them. I am speaking rather of the redeemed believer, whose 'life is hid with Christ in God;' and I want to persuade all parties, both those that do, and those that do not, possess the title-deeds, to consider well the unspeakable blessedness of having the title safely deposited with the Son of God, so that, whatever happens, whatever success or discouragement, whether joy or trial, whether life or death, we may be perfectly sure

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that all is safe, for the redemption has been completed by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the title-deeds are safe, being laid up in the treasury of God.

VIII. THE PIT.

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'O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.'—LAM. iii. 58.

We studied in the last lecture the remarkable faith of Jeremiah. We found how he redeemed the field in Anathoth at the very time that Jerusalem was invested by the Chaldeans, and he himself was predicting the certainty of its destruction: but in that moment of hopelessness he had such entire trust in the promise of restoration, and such assurance in the validity of the title, that he purchased the field as readily as he would have done had everything been at the height of prosperity. We saw in such conduct the practical acting of faith. But it is very interesting also to look at the hidden life of faith, and to know, while he was thus acting, what was secretly passing in his soul. I think that this passage may throw great light on the subject. From ver. 55 it is clear that he referred to a time when he was in the low dungeon: 'I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon.' We are not informed to which imprisonment he referred. It may have been the imprisonment in the courts of the prison which was in the court of the king's house, during which he redeemed the land of Hanameel, or it may have been the much more severe imprisonment which subsequently followed, as described Jer. xxxviii. 6, when they let him down by ropes into a deep, damp pit, called the dungeon of Malchiah. The expression 'the low dungeon,' seems rather to describe this latter captivity, and we may picture to ourselves God's faithful servant left alone in a deep, dark pit, standing up to his waist in the mire, without a comfort, without a friend, and without even a fellow-prisoner to share his trouble. His title-deeds to the field in Anathoth would not do much to help him there. But he was a man of trust, and afterwards, when he was still in sore trouble, and deeply grieved at the ruin of the city, he could look back on that time and say, 'Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul, thou hast redeemed my life.'

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Let us study then this remarkable record of his intercourse with God during this time of his deep trouble. There was nothing done. It was not a time for doing. He could not climb out, he could only stand and wait. What then was passing in his soul? What transactions took place between him and God? To these questions I think this passage supplies an answer. There are three things that seem perfectly clear.

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(1.) He called on the name of the Lord. Perhaps he remembered the words of Psalm xxxiv.: 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' At all events he acted on them, and though in all probability he could not kneel because of the mire, yet he could pray, and so he did. But he was not like many people who live prayerless lives, and only begin to pray when they get into trouble, for prayer was no new thing to him. He was no stranger at the throne of grace, and he could look back on many happy occasions in which he had reason to be quite sure God had answered him. It is a terrible thing when men go on, strangers to prayer, till they are driven to it by calamity. It was not so with Jeremiah. He knew the mercy-seat well, and he was well known there. He could refer to answers in former times, and say, 'Thou hast heard my voice,' and so appeal to God in his present trouble and say, 'Hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.' There was both a breathing and a cry; the cry being the actual expression of his wants in words, and the breathing, the outpouring of his soul in mental intercourse with a God who knew his thoughts. It is well to remember this distinction between the breathing and the prayer. The prayer is not altogether unlike the food at stated seasons. The breathing is the unceasing communion of soul as essential to life as breath is to the body.

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(2.) And now mark, in the second place, how God treated him. The King of Kings was not ashamed of being the companion of the prisoner in the pit. It was a deep, dark dungeon; but the man of God was not alone there. The stone on the top could not shut out God, as it could not shut in prayer. And you will observe the prophet was not required to climb out of the pit to find the Lord, as so many people are continually trying to do, but the Lord drew nigh to him when he was at the bottom, not when he was at the top, or half-way up; but at the bottom, in the mire, and in the dark. It was there that God drew near to him in the day that he called, and most graciously spoke to his soul, and said, 'Fear not.' How often, how mercifully have these words been spoken! I believe they occur more than fifty times in Scripture. How often do we meet with such words as 'Fear not, Abraham.' 'Fear not, thou worm Jacob.' 'Fear not, Daniel.' 'Fear not, Zacharias.' 'Fear not, little flock.' 'Fear not, Paul.' 'Fear not, I am the first and the last!' Do not all these passages show that there is reason for fear in outward life, and that there is the element of fear in the human heart, but there may be a victory over fear even in the bottom of the pit, when the Lord Himself draws nigh, and says, 'Fear not.' But you may say you cannot hear the words, and, no doubt, in that you are correct, for we are not to expect loud voices from heaven. We have not the least reason to believe that Jeremiah heard a voice. When David prayed, 'Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation,' he did not mean that these words should be spoken audibly to his ear. But he did mean that the assurance of God's salvation should be applied by the Holy Spirit to his heart. And so when God drew near to Jeremiah and said, 'Fear not,' we are not to

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understand that His person was visible to the eye, or the sound of His voice perceptible to the ear. But we are to understand that He so spoke to his heart as to assure him of His nearness, and to still his fears. And so it is with us. We do not look for anything perceptible by outward sense, but we do look for a rest from fear in the heart through the divine application of the Lord's grace and very present help to the soul.

(3.) And now consider, thirdly, the practical result in Jeremiah's attitude of mind. He could look calmly up to Him who had drawn nigh unto Him, and say, 'O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul, thou hast redeemed my life.' It is difficult to determine exactly whether this was his language in the low dungeon, or after he was taken out of it. We read in Jer. xxxviii., that Ebed-melech, one of the king's eunuchs, obtained permission to draw him up out of the dungeon, and he was subsequently confined in the court of the prison. As I have frequently pointed out, the word redemption sometimes stands simply for deliverance, and it is possible that it may do so here, and refer to the deliverance by Ebed-melech. But I do not think it does, for the latter part of the chapter seems clearly to teach that when Jeremiah wrote these words he was not yet delivered, but was still enduring the bitter hostility of his revengeful enemies. I am, therefore, rather disposed to regard these words as the utterance of a trusting heart when he was still in the low dungeon. I look on them, not as the effect of Ebed-melech pulling him out, but of God drawing near to him when he was in it, and saying to his soul, 'Fear not.' I think the passage is faith's reply to God's address. God drew near, and said, 'Fear not,' and faith accepted it at once, though still in the pit, and said, 'Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul, thou hast redeemed my life.' The language seems to lead us far beyond anything done by Ebed-melech, to a divine redemption, and a divine pleading of his cause. They remind us of those other words of Jeremiah, 'Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause;' Jer. L. 34; and I cannot help thinking that Jeremiah looked forward, as David did, to the great redemption by the Lord Jesus, as purposed from eternity, and promised in the sure word of God. As David said, 'Thou hast redeemed me;' so he said, 'Thou hast redeemed my life.' It was the Redeemer Himself that drew near to him in his low estate, and as it were said unto his soul, 'I am thy salvation.' The promised work was not yet accomplished, but it was brought home to his heart, and, though the stone was still on the mouth of the dungeon, his soul was free, and his life was safe, for he was redeemed in the coming Christ.

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If this be the meaning of the passage, does it not teach us that redeeming grace must always be our great help in trouble? If we are brought to the bottom of the pit, by sorrow, by sickness, by calamity, by the approach of death, or by the deep and painful sense of sin, all true source of strength must ever be in the great work of redemption wrought out for us by the Son of God. It is that which opens the way to the throne, and which enables us to rest in the assurance of the love of God. You may find many difficulties in the way of faith, and many drawbacks under the profound sense of your own unworthiness. But it is wonderful to find how they disappear before the cross of Christ; and if only you are enabled to say, 'Thou hast redeemed my life,' you will find in that one fact, a blessed, holy, peaceful resting-place, even though by outward circumstances or inward trial you may still be at the bottom of the pit.

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But whatever view we take of the expression, 'Thou hast redeemed my life,' one thing is perfectly clear, that the redemption was applied to Jeremiah's soul at the bottom of the pit. If it is to be explained of deliverance it was when he was sunk into the mire at the bottom of the low dungeon that the deliverance was applied. And if it describes the application to his soul of the Lord's redemption, and his acceptance of it as something already as sure as if it were perfected, it was when he was bowed down in the very depths of trouble that the blessed work was brought home with peace to his soul. Whatever meaning you give to the word 'redemption' in this passage, redemption was brought home to him at the bottom of the pit.

Now I cannot imagine a more important principle than this for all those who really desire to partake of all the blessings of redemption. Of course there are some who do not trouble their minds about it, being satisfied with their own religious respectability; but there are multitudes deeply concerned about it. They earnestly desire to be able to say, 'Thou hast redeemed my life,' but they cannot do so; and yet possibly they have been really taking pains to do so for many years, although without the least sign of progress. Now may not their difficulties arise in many cases from their having reversed the order of the dealings of God? They have hoped to climb up partially out of the pit, and to reach redemption at the top, instead of accepting it as a free gift of God while they are still helpless at the bottom. In other words, they are endeavouring first to remove their difficulties, and then to trust redemption. No wonder then that they completely fail! for how are they to climb up out of the pit? and how are they to overcome their difficulties while they are still at a distance from redeeming grace? It is redemption that is to deliver, redemption that is to raise us from the dead, redemption that removes the difficulty, how then can we ever hope to rise until redemption is applied and realised? If redemption is not sufficient to reach down to one in a state of utter hopelessness, it is insufficient for the conscience-stricken sinner. Remember, therefore, the case of Jeremiah. Consider his case as an illustration of your own, and if you are yourself at the bottom of what I may term the religious pit, in a low dungeon from which you cannot rise, remember how the Lord drew near to him when he was at the bottom, and did not wait till he had climbed even half-way to reach His hand. Just so it must be with you. He must stoop to reach you before you can rise to reach Him. Your first act of faith must be when you are at the bottom. It will be there, and not at the top, or half-way up, that for the first time you will realise a finished redemption. If ever you have the unspeakable joy of saying in all the happiness of personal appropriation, 'Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life,' you will have to do so before you have risen above your present level. Do not

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therefore wait to make some poor, feeble, ineffective effort to rise; but as you are in the midst of your discouragements, though the stone still seems to stop the mouth of the low dungeon, trust at once with a bold act of fearless faith, and without waiting to deserve it, act at once on His own invitation, 'Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.'

But as for those amongst you that have been brought up out of the pit, what should be the language of your thankful heart? You have not only seen the great redemption finished, but you have experienced its application. You have not merely been taught to trust Him in the bottom of the low dungeon, but you can say as David did, 'He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.' Ps. xl. 2. If so, will you not go on and add, 'He hath put a new song in my mouth, even thanksgiving unto our God?' Will you not join heart and soul in the language of our Communion Service, 'We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty?'

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IX. ATONEMENT.

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'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'—GAL. iii. 13.

IN tracing the doctrine of redemption through the types and illustrative narratives of the Old Testament, we found that redemption always includes two ideas—deliverance and ransom—and that in some cases, as *e.g.*, in the redemption from Egypt, the deliverance is the more prominent of the two. I cannot help thinking that in this respect there is a difference between the Old Testament and the New. In the New, as well as the Old, the two ideas are always found, and the deliverance is always included; but the writers of the New Testament appear to have had their minds so full of the marvellous love that was shown on the cross of Christ, that the ransom, and the ransom price, appear in many passages to have been the prominent subjects of their thoughts. Hence it follows that in a great many religious books, and even in our Church Catechism, redemption is confounded with the atonement, and people lose sight of the fact that it includes the consequences of the atonement as well as the atonement itself, the release of the captive as well as the payment of the ransom; the actual salvation of the chosen people of God, as well as the satisfaction of the law by the substitution of the Son of God for man. In order, therefore, to get a clear view of the whole subject, we must consider the two parts separately; first, the ransom, satisfaction, or atonement, and after that the deliverance that follows. May it please God in His mercy to give us the sacred teaching of the Holy Spirit, and to lead us into the full realisation of the marvellous wonders of His redeeming love!

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We must clearly begin with the great subject of the satisfaction for sin, and the deliverance from the curse, which was the immediate and first result of it. For this purpose we cannot have a finer passage than the text. It leads us straight to the root of the matter, and will suggest four most important subjects—the Redeemer Himself, the curse from which He has redeemed us, the act by which He redeemed us, and the persons whom He has redeemed. These, if God permit, we must consider in order.

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I. The Redeemer Himself.

It is perfectly clear that unless we know Him, we shall never understand His work. If there is confusion respecting Him, there will be confusion respecting all that He has done; so if we wish to enjoy the salvation, we must begin with the Saviour.

Now in this passage He is described as 'Christ.' This is the name continually given Him throughout this Epistle. I know of only one instance in the whole Epistle in which the name 'Jesus' occurs, without having either 'Christ,' or 'The Christ,' attached to it. The reason most probably was, that St. Paul was writing to Jewish believers, and so made use of the name by which the expected Redeemer was predicted in Jewish prophecy. There are, therefore, certain great lessons to be gathered from the name.

(1.) He was the predicted Redeemer. It was by this name that Daniel foretold His advent and death; for in Dan. ix. 25, 26, He is predicted as 'Messiah the Prince;' and it was under this name that the believing Jews were expecting Him, for Andrew said to his brother, John, i. 41, 'We have found the Messias, which is being interpreted the Christ.'

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(2.) Then again He was the anointed Redeemer. The meaning of the word Messias, or Christ, is anointed, so that the title, 'The Christ,' means 'The Anointed One;' and the words of the text might be rendered, 'The anointed One has redeemed us.' Now consider for one moment what was involved in this title. It conveys the assurance of the eternal purpose of God, and of His divine appointment of the Lord Jesus to the office. We all know that the anointing was the act of consecration to the sacred offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and we can see at a glance why Christ was anointed, when set apart to fill an office which comprehended all the three—the prophetic, the priestly, and the royal. His great redeeming act, therefore, was not merely the result of His own mind and His own benevolence, but it was the sacred work unto which He was

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anointed by the Father. It was accepted by Himself, and laid upon Him by God. In undertaking it He had the support of divine authority, and before He undertook the office He was solemnly set apart to it by God.

(3.) But there are still further lessons taught us by this title 'Christ,' for we are taught in the Old Testament the Anointed One was in all respects qualified for the redeeming work, inasmuch as He was one of us, and at the same time was God. Turn to one passage, viz. Ps. xlv. 7. There we learn that He was a kinsman, and therefore qualified according to the law to redeem, for the words are, 'Thy God hath anointed thee above *thy fellows*;' while at the same time the sixth verse teaches that the Anointed One is no other than God Himself, for He is addressed in the words, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'

Such, then, is our Redeemer. He was predicted from the first day of man's fall; foretold by the whole line of prophets; expected by the whole line of believers; set apart to His work in God's eternal purpose; anointed by God; and so, before men and angels, solemnly consecrated to the sacred work which He was willing in the Father's name to undertake; and besides all that, he is perfect both in manhood and Godhead, so that in His own double nature He is one with us as a kinsman, while He is one with the Father in the omnipotence of Jehovah. Such is our Redeemer—can He fail? Such is our Saviour—can there be disappointment in trusting Him? Such is the Lord's Anointed One, and whatever be the deep wants of our fallen hearts, can we believe for one moment that He is insufficient to meet the need? Can there be any doubt respecting the statement of the Psalmist, 'With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption?' (Ps. cxxx. 7.)

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II. We may proceed, then, to consider the curse from which He has redeemed us. According to the text it is the curse of the law, the curse described in verse 10, where we read, 'As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' It is most important to bear this well in mind, for the word 'curse' is so connected in common conversation with that which is vindictive and merciless that there is danger of our losing sight of the fact that the curse of God is the calm, deliberate, and even merciful result of the just judgment of a merciful God. There is no cruelty in the maintenance of a righteous law, for the maintenance of law is essential to the happiness of a people. Thus the strict execution of law is consistent with the most true and tender affection.. David, as the king, was compelled, in the maintenance of law, to banish Absalom after the murder of Ammon; but all the while David loved him, and his 'soul longed to go forth unto Absalom.' So we have heard of judges moved to tears of tender pity while passing sentence on some unhappy criminal whom the law compelled them to condemn. In such a case there was no cruelty in the law, nor any want of mercy in the judge. The sentence on the sinner was the necessary and righteous condemnation of the sin. Parliament was not cruel when it passed the law; the jury was not cruel when it found the culprit guilty; the judge was not cruel when he condemned the criminal to death; and the Queen was not cruel when she signed the warrant for the execution. Whatever was done by any one of the parties concerned was done simply because the maintenance of law is essential to the preservation of life and order throughout the land. Just so it is with the curse of the law in the government of God. There is no cruelty in God's law, or God's execution of its sentence. The law—it is holy, just, and good; a perfect law, without a fault. And the Judge—He is holy, just, pure, spotless, and merciful. He willeth not the death of a sinner, and has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; and the curse is not the result of anything vindictive or unmerciful in Him. It is just like David's sentence on Absalom, rendered necessary by the claims of a righteous government, and the necessity of maintaining law.

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But, though the sentence is passed in what I may term 'loving righteousness,' there is something inexpressibly awful in it. Indeed it is all the more awful when regarded as the righteous sentence of a God who loves us. The fact that the sentence is passed, notwithstanding such love, is itself a proof of its awful importance, and the clearest possible evidence that a righteous God cannot clear the guilty, and cannot set aside the law which He has given to His people. We must conclude, therefore, that the curse is certain, and that it cannot be set aside by anything that we can do. We have no power to deliver ourselves from the awful curse of the law of God. It is a judgment far more certain, and far more awful, than that of the wretched criminal in the condemned cell waiting for execution. It is more awful, for it cuts us off from God Himself. It hides His countenance; it separates from His love, and it reaches right away into eternity. Such is the curse of the law, the curse that foolish sinners trifle with, the curse that ungodly men bandy about in foul oaths. It is a just curse—a curse inflicted according to law; a curse pronounced by one who loves the culprit; a curse that could not be set aside unless the Lawgiver were to neutralise His law, and the righteous King abandon the holy principles of His kingdom.

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III. So we now turn to the third point,—the redemption price, or the great act by which He has redeemed us. Now, you will observe that with reference to this great subject there are no illustrations employed in the text. There is nothing said about a ransom, or an offering, or any other illustration; but we are brought at once to the great fact of the substitution of the Redeemer for the redeemed: 'He hath redeemed us from the curse, being made a curse for us.' I know of no way of explaining that passage, except by the doctrine of substitution. The passage is exactly like those other words of the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. v. 21: 'He hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.' In the one passage the Lord Jesus is said to be made a curse, and in the

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other to be made sin; and in both it is said to have been done 'for us' (ὕπερ ἡμῶν), *i.e.* on our behalf, or in our stead. Now do not suppose that I do not recognise the depth of mystery involved in this most wonderful truth. I can sympathise with those that scarcely know how to grasp it. I know there is a depth about it beyond the limits of human thought; but there are two considerations that have always satisfied my own mind.

(1.) It is not likely that the limited mind of a short-sighted man should be able to fathom the eternal counsels of God, and reduce the divine purpose within the compass of his own intellect. If we once admit that the plan of salvation is divine, we must be prepared to meet with many things far beyond all human thought. So it is in this instance. The substitution of the spotless Redeemer for the guilty sinner has in it a breadth, and length, and depth, and height, that is utterly beyond all human capacity, and to the very last will pass all knowledge.

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(2.) We can see the fact throughout the history. Is there any other way of explaining either the agony in the garden, or the cry on the cross? Again and again do we see happy believers stepping down into the valley of the shadow of death in perfect peace, with a holy joy filling their hearts, and a holy calm lighting up their countenance; but the Lord Jesus, when He looked forward to it, was in agony. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and He cried, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' I confess I know no way of explaining the difference, except by the principle of substitution, as laid down in this passage, 'Being made a curse for us.'

So, again, I never met with any other explanation of that most marvellous cry which He uttered on the cross, when He exclaimed, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' How can that cry be explained except by the doctrine of substitution? Contrast the dying prayer of Stephen with the dying cry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen said, as I trust you and I may be able to say, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' and so in perfect peace he fell asleep. But the Lord Jesus was forsaken of God, and so uttered that bitter cry. How can we explain the difference? How can we understand the marvellous contrast? I never could see any explanation but one, and that is, in the doctrine of substitution. The Lord Jesus was made a curse in the place of Stephen, so Stephen was free. The sin of Stephen was imputed to the Son of God, and the righteousness of the Son of God was imputed to Stephen; so the Lord Jesus cried under the burden of the curse, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and Stephen prayed in the peaceful enjoyment of full reconciliation, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' The burden of the curse was too awful for us to bear, and too righteous for God to set aside. So the Lord, in boundless mercy, and with His own full consent, laid it on Him. There was a transfer of the imputation of guilt, and thus by God's marvellous grace, blessed be God, in Christ Jesus we are free.

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Now all this is done, and done for ever. Nothing can add to it, and nothing can take from it. We have nothing to do with any fresh sacrifice for sin. We want no masses for either the living or the dead, and we know we cannot make up any fresh sacrifice by penance or self-denial. In all such matters the one question is, Is the one redemption by the one substitute sufficient, or is it not? If it is, we want no further sacrifice, for the work is done. If it is not, we may give up in despair, for it must be obvious to any man that if the substitution of the Son of God fall short of the requirements of the law, nothing that we can add can ever supply the deficiency. But, thanks be to God, there is no room for discussion. As we are taught in our Communion Service, 'He made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.' He was Himself the Anointed One of God, even the Son of God. In His death He fulfilled the covenant of God. In His resurrection He was accepted as having completed the work of God; in His ascension He entered into the holy place, by one offering having perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

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And now what is the result? What is the consequence of this completed act of substitution? Surely nothing short of this, that every soul found in Him is legally free. Of course I am not speaking of those who reject that substitution or live without Him. They must bear their own burden; and an awful burden, I fear, they will find it. I am speaking of those who accept Him as their representative, and are one with Him as their substitute. Now to any one of them the great act of substitution has brought a full, complete, legal release. They are as free from the curse of the law as if they had never sinned. The law has no more power to condemn them than if it had never been issued, or if they had never broken it. They are washed white as snow in the blood of the Lamb, and there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. So there we may rest in calm, happy, peaceful trust, for the law is satisfied, and the curse is removed. In His agony we see our peace, in His death our life, and in His bitter cry on the cross our full, perfect, and everlasting reconciliation to God.

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X. ATONEMENT.

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'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'—GAL. iii. 13.

WHEN we considered this passage in the last lecture, we did not complete the subject. We found who the Redeemer was, *viz.* the Christ. We found what it was that He redeemed us from, *viz.* the curse, or just judgment of God's righteous law. We found also what was the redemption price, or great redeeming act, *viz.* the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God for the sinner.

But there is a fourth point of the utmost possible importance which we had not time to investigate, viz. the question for whom, or in whose behalf, this great work was accomplished by the Saviour. But there is no part of the subject more vitally affecting our own practical life; for unless the Lord Jesus was a substitute for ourselves, we as individuals may admire His mercy, but can never have a share in the blessing of His saving work. So far as we ourselves are personally concerned, our whole hope depends on our being included in that little word 'us,' when it is said, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' If we cannot each one make use of that sentence in the singular number, and say, 'Christ hath redeemed *me*, being made a curse for *me*,' the passage may call forth our admiration, but to our own souls it will bring no abiding peace. It is, therefore, a matter of the deepest personal interest to us all that we should clearly understand who is included, and who is not included, in that word 'us;' or, in other words, who are they that the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed by His blood. p. 117

It would have been strange indeed if a matter of such overwhelming interest had been quietly passed by without calling forth a very careful investigation, and accordingly it gave rise at one time to one of the most prominent controversies of the day. Indeed there has always been a division amongst the students of the Word of God on the subject. Some have believed in what is termed 'particular redemption,' a redemption limited exclusively to the elect; while others have most earnestly advocated the doctrine of a universal atonement, an atonement, *i.e.* made for the whole world in virtue of which a free offer of complete reconciliation is made without money and without price to every living soul. p. 118

It is my own belief that a great deal of the confusion respecting the subject arises from the indistinct use of words; and I am thoroughly persuaded that before we can ascertain whom He has redeemed, we must clearly understand what is meant by redemption. If we do not understand redemption itself, we shall never understand its limits. Now I cannot help thinking that I have proved that, throughout the word of God, redemption means deliverance; and in the case of the great salvation, deliverance through atonement. In some passages the delivering power is more prominent than in others, as, for example, in Luke, xxi. 28, and Rom. viii. 23; but in all it is there, and I do not know of a single passage in which redemption stands for atonement alone as disconnected with the consequent deliverance. Whenever it occurs it implies atonement applied, or atonement enjoyed, atonement made effectual for the actual salvation of the soul. p. 119
But, though it is thus clear in the word of God, there is great confusion in many religious books. Many writers appear to speak of atonement and redemption as if they were the same, and so apply to redemption passages which speak only of atonement, and apply to atonement those texts which refer, not to atonement only, but also to the actual deliverance for which atonement has prepared the way. It is most important, therefore, that we should keep the distinction clearly in view, and never forget that the redemption of the Gospel includes two parts, deliverance and atonement. The two are bound together as intimately as it is possible. The deliverance is the consequence of atonement, and the atonement is the cause of deliverance, but both one and the other are included in the full idea of redemption, as we may see, for example, in the song sung before the throne, 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.' Rev. v. 9. That passage clearly goes far beyond the act of substitution in redeeming mercy, for it manifestly includes an actual separation and salvation by delivering power. p. 120

Now, if we consider redemption in its full and complete sense of actual deliverance through the precious blood of the Lamb, it is perfectly clear that none but the elect of God are included in the blessing. As a matter of fact the rest are not delivered. According to St. John, the whole world lieth in wickedness, and if it is still lying in wickedness in no sense whatever can it be said to be delivered. None but the chosen people of God can ever say, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' Col. i. 13. As for the rest they do not profess to be delivered. Some do not even wish for the great deliverance; some, though they may feel a certain languid wish for it, never in earnest seek for it; and others, if they do seek, seek in a wrong way, and so never find. The result is, that practically they are not delivered. Thus we all acknowledge a particular, or limited, deliverance. We none believe that all are saved; and we must believe that the Lord Jesus actually delivers those only who are His own, those whom He describes in the words, 'The men which thou gavest me out of the world.' p. 121

But suppose we take redemption in the sense in which it is perpetually employed in religious books, viz., as meaning the same as atonement, there arises another question of incalculable importance which demands our most attentive consideration. Is the atonement limited as well as the deliverance? It is perfectly clear that none are delivered but God's chosen people. They, and they only, are plucked as brands from the burning, and eternally saved. According to the 17th Article, God 'hath constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.' But is nothing done for the remainder? In other words, did the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ extend to the whole world, or did it not? Was atonement made for all mankind in that marvellous act of mercy, or were the great majority left out altogether most miserably to perish, without any hope of deliverance, and without the possibility of being saved in the Lord Jesus? It is impossible to imagine a question of more urgent importance to all those who are anxious about their souls. p. 122

Now I am perfectly aware of the argument frequently urged, that the Lord Jesus Christ is certain to save all those for whom He shed His blood, and I am quite prepared to acknowledge that,

humanly speaking, there is great apparent reason in it. But I do not believe that it is according to Scripture; and after all we must rely in all such matters on the statements of God's word, and not on our own conclusions. I would refer you, then, to two passages which certainly seem to be conclusive on that point. The one is 1 Cor. viii. 11, 'Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?' The other is 2 Pet. ii. 1, where, predicting the dangers of the latter days, the Apostle says, 'There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.' The first of these texts seems certainly to teach very clearly that those for whom Christ died may perish, and the other that people for whom the Lord had given the redemption price of His own most precious blood may still deny Him, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. We must not therefore be guided in such a matter by our own conclusions. The whole plan from first to last is divine. The eternal purpose is divine; the Saviour is divine; the salvation is divine; the atonement is divine, and the revelation of the great purpose must likewise be divine. We must not attempt, therefore, to cut our system square by the rule of our own opinion, but must take God's Scripture just as it stands, and receive God's salvation just as He has revealed it in His Word.

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What, then, has He revealed? That is the question. Has He taught us that the Lord Jesus Christ shed His most precious blood for the elect alone or for all? Blessed be God! the testimony of Scripture appears as plain as the sun in heaven that the atonement was made for all, and that in consequence of that atonement the door is thrown open to every sinner upon earth. I have no time now to attempt to bring before you the multitude of passages which abound in Scripture in proof of this position. I must be content to draw your attention to only three, the first relating to the fact itself, the second to the love that led to it, and the third to the offer made in consequence of it.

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The first is from 1 John, ii. 2. But before you examine it, turn for one moment to the words of the same apostle in the fifth chapter of the same epistle, and 19th verse, 'We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' That verse shows with indisputable clearness who is meant by 'we,' and who by 'the world.' By 'we' is meant the people of God, believers, the elect. By the world the rest of mankind, those who live and die unconverted and unsaved. And now turn to the passage in the second chapter, 'And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' Surely the 'our' in that verse must refer to the same persons as the 'we' in the fifth chapter, and 'the whole world' in the second chapter must be the same as 'the whole world' in the fifth. But if so it is perfectly clear that He died not for the elect alone but for all mankind; for the whole world that lieth in wickedness.

From the second passage we learn exactly the same respecting the love that led to it. I refer to John, iii. 16. But before we refer to it let us turn to another text in explanation, viz., that most wonderful prayer of our blessed Saviour in John, xvii. 6, 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.' You will observe in these words the clear distinction between the world and the elect. The mass of men are described as the world, while the elect are said to be given to Him out of it, set apart as a separate people, and given Him in the covenant of God. And now turn to the passage in John, iii., 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Surely we must take 'the world' here in the same sense as in the other passage. It is impossible to believe that by 'the world' he meant the elect of God given Him from out of the world, the peculiar people whom He Himself most carefully distinguishes from the world. Surely, then, we must conclude that the love which moved Him to make the atonement was a love for us all, a free love, an unmerited love, a compassionate love, a most merciful love, to every individual involved in the ruin of the fall.

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We are brought to exactly the same conclusion if we look at the offer that results from it. Turn to that magnificent invitation which we find just at the conclusion of the book of life, Rev. xxii. 17, 'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Now if you study that verse you find the Bride employed in proclaiming God's invitation. Who then is meant by the Bride? Surely nothing else than the church of God's elect; those who were chosen in Him before the world was. But how is the Bride to be employed? What is to be her work as described in this passage? Is it not to go forth in the Lord's name, and proclaim to the perishing the free offer of His saving grace? 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.' Would it be possible to construct a sentence which would proclaim more clearly a universal invitation? an invitation to be given by the elect to all the world?

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Surely, then, we may every one of us accept that offer, and regard the atonement as an atonement made for ourselves. You may see no evidence of your election. You may look into your own heart, and find there nothing whatever to lead you to believe that you are one of God's chosen people. But you are not called to wait till you have discovered such evidence; and if you do wait, you may wait for ever, for it is perfectly impossible that you should ever have evidence of your election till after you have trusted in His atoning blood. But without any such evidence you may fall back on the finished substitution of the Son of God for the sinner. You may take the words of this text, 'Being made a curse for us,' and, whatever you are, may put it in the singular number, and say, 'Being made a curse for me,' yes! 'for me, even for me.' If, therefore, you are really anxious about the salvation of your soul, do not stop to search into your own sinful heart

for evidences of your election; but fall boldly on the fact that, whether you are elected or not, Christ Jesus was your substitute. Cleave to the fact that the propitiation was for the world, that the love that moved God to it was a love to the world; and that the offer made in consequence of it is an offer to the world. Trust that. Accept that. Rest in that, and leave it to God to settle the matter of your election; for of this you may be perfectly sure that you will never enjoy any evidence of your election unto life until you have learned to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and His perfect work without it. You must learn a lesson from that poor woman of Canaan. She was apparently quite shut out by the doctrine of election, for she was not one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and the Lord Himself said to her that it was not right to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. But she was not discouraged by the difficulty. She pleaded, 'Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table;' and the result was that she did not merely pick up the crumbs, but she was made partaker of the feast itself, and went to her home rejoicing in our Lord's approval, and her daughter's cure.

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Let us all then accept the fact that in His boundless mercy He was made a curse for us. But we must bear in mind at the same time, that He does not force upon us the blessings of that substitution. If we choose to live without the substitute we may. If people are so occupied by the world that they do not care for it; or so satisfied with themselves that they do not feel the need of it; or so unmindful of the holiness of God that they cannot see the necessity of it; they are at full liberty to reject it, and have full power to live without it. But then, it is obvious they must bear their own burden, and all the weight of it. The Lord Jesus has satisfied the law as their substitute; but if they decline to accept that satisfaction, it is perfectly clear that there is nothing left for them but to satisfy it for themselves. They must blot out their own curse in their own way, and how they are going to do it I cannot tell. I know of nothing but Christ the substitute that can remove the just judgment of a broken law; and if men live and die without Him, I see no prospect for them but that they live in their sin, and die in their sin, and go down into eternity with the whole of the awful weight of unforgiven sin resting on their poor unforgiven souls. And who can say that such a sentence would be hard, or severe, or unjust? If there were no substitute provided we might possibly think the law severe. But, now that in boundless mercy God has Himself provided the substitute, who can say that it is a hard measure if the sinner is crushed under the burden which he resolves to bear?

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XI. FORGIVENESS.

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'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.—EPH. i. 7.

'And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.'—LUKE, xi. 4.

IN our study of the divine redemption we considered from the words of St. Paul to the Galatians the great foundation act of the whole, viz., the satisfaction made for sin by the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. We had no time then to go on to the consequent deliverance. But we do not want to have either a building without a foundation, or a foundation without a building. In other words, we do not wish either to have a superficial life of Christian experience without a solid foundation in the great work of atonement, or to be so exclusively occupied by the atonement as to forget the great practical deliverance which is in fact the completion of redeeming grace. Having laid the foundation, then, in the study of the ransom, redemption price, or satisfaction for sin, we must pass on to the great deliverance with which God follows up His work of mercy. This we will now do, if God permit, and may He Himself put forth the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, and this very day in His own grace deliver souls!

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Now what is the first great gift of God in delivering souls?—the first result of the blood of atonement when applied to the salvation of the sinner? I hope that if we were all to speak we should give the same answer to the question, and that there are none amongst us who would hesitate to reply, 'Forgiveness.' So long as sin remains unforgiven there can be no freedom, nor any deliverance of any kind whatever. Unforgiven sin blocks the way against all hope of escape, and therefore when God invites a sinner to return He first assures him of the blotting out of sin: 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.' (Isa. xlv. 22.)

But now arises a question which has sometimes occasioned difficulty in thoughtful minds. A complete forgiveness is the starting-point of the Christian's life; and accordingly this forgiveness of sin is described as a complete and present privilege, so we read, 'In whom,' *i.e.*, in Christ the Beloved One, 'we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' The apostle speaks of it there as something of which we are now in the present enjoyment, for he says, 'We have it.' It is ours now. But yet in other passages, such as the Lord's Prayer, the children of God are taught to ask for it with as much regularity as for their daily bread. How is it, then, that we are told to ask for that we have already? Why do we pray the Lord's Prayer every day when we already have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins? It is a very natural question, and I cannot be surprised if persons feel the difficulty. But I believe that if we look carefully at the real work of redemption it will throw great light on the subject. We shall find if we do so that there are two kinds of forgiveness described in the word of God, the one the immediate, and the

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other the consequent, result of redemption. There is judicial forgiveness as the foundation, and parental forgiveness as the consequence: the two being closely connected with each other, and both resulting from redemption. Let us study them separately.

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I. Judicial forgiveness.

In order to understand judicial forgiveness we must consider the judicial condemnation of the unforgiven man, and we must carefully remember God's offices as King, as Lawgiver, and as Judge. He is a Saviour, but He is a ruler likewise, and He rules the world in righteousness. But if we think of Him as the great executive of a perfectly righteous and holy law, acting on principles of strict and unvarying righteousness, we must see in a moment that we have all been brought under judicial condemnation, for the law condemns us all. It condemned our whole race in the person of our head and first father when Adam sinned, and the sentence of death was passed on him as the representative of man. It condemns our nature as alien and strange to God. And it condemns our lives that have abounded in action contrary to His will. I know that some people find a difficulty in the first two points, and cannot understand the condemnation of the race, or of the nature. I can appreciate their difficulty, though I am quite sure it is fully met in Scripture. But I have not time to discuss it now. But this one thing I am sure is plain; even if there were no condemnation on the race or on the nature, there is quite sufficient in the past life to bring condemnation on any soul amongst us. Even if we had not been condemned in Adam there has been quite sufficient to condemn us in ourselves. There is not one amongst us who is not guilty of that for which he knows himself to be responsible. There is not one who dare stand before God on the plea that he has never sinned, not one therefore that must not acknowledge in some form or other that he cannot be saved if the sentence of the law is to be carried out on his sin.

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But if you think over it you will see that according to natural principle judicial forgiveness is impossible. Law can acquit, and law can condemn, but law cannot forgive. Law can pronounce a man innocent, and law can pass the sentence of death, but law cannot pardon the guilty. Our legal position by nature is perfectly hopeless. We have incurred a legal and just condemnation, but nature has made no provision for a legal and just forgiveness. It is the effort to overcome this insuperable difficulty that has kept thousands of conscientious heathen toiling on throughout their lives in deep religious anxiety without a ray of light to throw peace upon their path.

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But the whole difficulty is met in God's great plan of redemption, as revealed in those wonderful words, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' The forgiveness resulting from the great act of redemption is exactly what we want, a legal and judicial remission of a legal and judicial sentence. The sentence of the law has been as fully carried out in the person of our most Blessed Redeemer as it would have been had the whole race been cast into hell for ever. The whole difficulty is removed by the principle of substitution, or satisfaction. If Christ was made a curse for us, then the curse is gone from us, and we are free. The holiness of the law is honoured, the righteousness of the lawgiver is preserved, the sentence of the judge is established, not one jot or one tittle of the law is allowed to pass; but, notwithstanding all, the man that has broken it, although he has broken it, is absolutely free. Thus, in Rom. iii. 26, we are taught that the result of propitiation is, 'That God might be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'

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Here, therefore, we have what I have termed a judicial forgiveness, a forgiveness in perfect harmony with the strict righteousness of law; a forgiveness which is, in fact, the letting forth of God's eternal love when all legal claims are satisfied. Till that redeeming act was complete, the love was as it were pent up, and could not, in consistency with His own law, flow forth to a condemned people. But all is different now. The law itself pronounces in favour of the condemned, and the result is that God is not only faithful, but just to forgive. And to this righteous forgiveness we may apply the text, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.'

II. Parental Forgiveness. But when we are in the enjoyment of this judicial forgiveness it may be said, 'If this be the case, why should we any more pray for forgiveness? Why should we say the Lord's prayer? Are we not taught that we already have forgiveness as we have redemption through His blood? To answer this question we must mark the distinction between judicial and parental forgiveness.

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Consider, then, the position into which every believer is brought through redemption and judicial forgiveness. According to verse 6, we are 'accepted in the Beloved,' accepted, *i.e.*, in Christ Jesus the Beloved One. And according to Gal. iv. 5, we are made, by virtue of that redemption, children of God, for Christ was sent forth 'to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' If, then, we be in Christ Jesus, what is our position? The curse which fell on the whole race through Adam is gone, and we shall soon rise from the dead into new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The condemnation of our sinful and ruined nature as well as of all the sin of all our past lives is forgiven for ever; and much more than that, for, the barriers being all broken down, we are accepted in the Beloved and 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.'

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What, then, is the consequence of this new position? And what does it involve? Nothing less than a parental and filial union. In Christ Jesus you have a Father who loves you, a Father whom you love; a Father who cares for you, and on whose care you may confidently trust; a Father who

speaks to your soul by His Spirit, and who admits you into close and confidential intimacy with Himself. Now it is perfectly clear, that as you pass through life, it will be the joy of your heart to please that loving Father. The more you love Him, the more you will rejoice to please Him, and He gives you the assurance that your efforts, defective though they be, do please Him, for we are told not to forget to do good, and to communicate, 'for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' (Heb. xiii. 16.) But, on the other hand, you may grieve Him. I can never forget the tender love of my dearest mother, or how fondly I loved her in return. I have the greatest satisfaction also in the recollection of her pleasure as she witnessed my boyish efforts to carry out her wishes and those of my father. But I can look back to more than fifty years ago and remember one or two sad days in which I pained her. Oh, dear children! never pain your mother, for the thought may remain with you long after she is in the grave, long after the time when you can no more throw your arms round her neck, and ask her forgiveness for what you have said or done to grieve her. Now it is just the same with our Heavenly Father. We may love Him, truly love Him, love Him without a doubt. Moreover, we may please Him, please Him well in all things, and bring to His service that offering of the whole man with which he is well pleased. But we may also grieve Him, and I fear we often do. The free forgiveness through redeeming blood has not removed, eradicated, or laid to rest the old sinful human nature. Thus St. Paul tells us to 'grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption,' Eph. iv. 30; and he shows us how we may do so, viz., by corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking and malice. Do you think that a bad temper does not grieve Him, or unkind conversation, or pride of heart, or wandering thoughts in prayer, or any of the thousand things that may rise before the conscience of those who are not satisfied with a superficial Christian life? But if this be the case what do we want,—want day by day as we pass through life? Surely the parental forgiveness, the loving forgiveness of a loving Father, watching in love over His loving child, and with a Father's love, and a Father's authority, accepting the acknowledgment of sin, and day by day freely forgiving it. This perfectly explains the use of the Lord's prayer by the children of God. We come to Him in that prayer as our Father, and because He is our Father we ask Him as a Father to forgive us our sins. This does not supersede the judicial forgiveness, but is the consequence of it. Nor does it set aside redemption, for it is on redemption that the whole sonship depends. There is nothing independent of that most precious blood of Christ. It is through that blood of His that the curse is removed, and the judicial forgiveness granted; through that blood of His that we receive the adoption of sons, and are brought into the sacred relationship of children in a Father's family. It is through that blood of His that we are preserved in that relationship, and stand before the Father in a covenant union with the Son of God Himself. But resting on this power of the atoning blood, there is a great deal besides judicial forgiveness. If you be asking now the way of life, and anxious that all the sins of all your life may be blotted out, that so you may be saved from the condemnation of the law; then your only hope must be in the plenteous redemption wrought out for you on the cross when the Son of God redeemed you from the curse, being made a curse for you. And, thanks be to God! that is sufficient, for it has broken down every barrier, and set the way of life wide open before the chief of sinners. But if you have been saved from that condemnation, so that now you 'have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins:' you have also a great deal more, for you have besides it and resting on it, the unspeakable blessedness of a Father's love. You may daily fall back on the satisfaction of the law, and in consequence of that satisfaction, like loving children may cry, 'Abba, Father,' and claim a Father's forbearance and a Father's tenderness, a Father's provision, and a Father's forgiveness. It is this parental love that is the joy of our hearts when we kneel together round our Father's table, this parental forgiveness for which we pray when we say, 'Our Father which art in heaven, forgive us our trespasses.'

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Let us endeavour, then, to realise the legal condemnation gone; the judicial forgiveness granted; the adoption of sons bestowed; the Father's table spread; the Father's forgiveness ready; the Father's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us. And realizing this, shall we not draw near in faith? Shall we not confess to Him that we are heartily sorry for all our misdoings? Shall we not ask Him for His parental forgiveness? Shall we not feed at His table? Shall we not rest on His loving arm? Shall we not regard it as our chief joy to please Him? And shall we not out of the fulness of loving hearts exalt His name for the unspeakable riches of redeeming love; and praise Him from the bottom of our hearts that by His marvellous grace we even now 'have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins?' and having it, can appeal to a Father's love for daily forgiveness as for daily bread?

XII. PURITY.

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'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'—TIT. ii. 14.

If we wish to understand the various passages in the word of God on the subject of redemption, we must never forget the two parts of which redemption consists, so often brought before you in these lectures—the satisfaction of the law by the payment of redemption price, and the actual deliverance of the ransomed people as the result of the finished atonement. It is of especial importance that we bear this well in mind in the study of those texts in which redemption is spoken of as being either now in progress or still in the future, for there is no possibility of any present or future atonement, that having been for ever completed on Calvary, and such passages

can only refer to the work of deliverance which will not be complete till the glorious day of our Lord's appearing. The atonement is complete, but the deliverance is in progress still, and those texts refer to it.

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I believe that this remark is of great importance to the right understanding of this text. It occurs in the midst of one of the most practical chapters in the Bible. The words are addressed to the various different classes of society. Aged men are exhorted to be sober and sound in faith; aged women to be in behaviour as becometh godliness; young women to be sober and to love their husbands and their children; servants to be obedient, pleasant, not contradictory, and honest; and all of us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Now, according to the text, the great motive power to all this is the fact that our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ 'gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.' Let us study then the redemption work, and the redemption power; and may God the Holy Ghost so bless it to our souls that we may be led in practical life to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things!

I. The redemption work.

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To redeem in these words clearly means to deliver, as the result of the finished atonement. The foundation of the deliverance is the fact that our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. The actual deliverance is described in the words, 'that he might redeem us from all iniquity.' A question has arisen as to the meaning of this expression. Does it mean that He might redeem us from the curse and judgment of all iniquity and so set us legally free, as when He said, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us?' or does it mean that by the power of the Holy Ghost He might deliver us from the bondage of all iniquity, and so make us actually a holy people unto Himself? There is much to be said for both interpretations. 'Iniquity' may stand here for the curse, or guilt, of iniquity, as 'sin' stands for the guilt of sin in 1 Pet. ii. 24: 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.' Or it may stand for sin itself, and its deadly power over the ruined soul. I am inclined on the whole to prefer this latter application, and to believe that the words describe the actual deliverance from the dominion of sin. The context clearly points in that direction, and so, as far as I can judge, do the words. The word here rendered iniquity strictly means 'lawlessness.' It is the same word as that in 1 John, iii. 4, where it is translated 'transgression of the law,' and appears generally to express the actual disobedience to the law, or will of God. If this be the case the idea evidently is that in our natural condition we are slaves and bondsmen to disobedience, or lawlessness. But that the great God and Saviour made an atonement for us in order that He might set us free from that dreadful yoke, and call us out to be a people set apart for His praise. This is in harmony with what we are taught in Rom. vi. 19, for there we are described as having in former times 'yielded our members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity' (the same word), and as now being set free by the grace of God. But there can be no such freedom without redemption from the curse of sin. You remember that when a man had sold himself to be a slave, the only way in which he could obtain his liberty was by his kinsman legally redeeming him from his master. So it seems to be here. Christ our kinsman has paid the ransom in order that we, being redeemed, may be freemen unto God, and may now as freemen have the joy of serving Him.

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But this is not all that is done for us, or nearly so, for the text does not merely refer to the bondage from which He died to deliver us, but leads us also to consider the new life to which He came to raise us. It takes the positive side as well as the negative. It looks forward as well as backward. It describes the new-master to whom being redeemed we belong, as well as the old master from whom by redemption we are delivered. Now you see this transfer very clearly in the text. The old master is lawlessness, the new master is Christ Himself. He came to redeem us from all iniquity, and 'purify unto himself a peculiar people.' 'Peculiar' does not mean odd, or eccentric; but special, and separated, as you may see by a comparison of Deut. vii. 6, and xiv. 2. In chap. vii. 6, we read, 'The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a *special* people unto himself,' and in chap. xiv. 2, 'The Lord hath chosen thee to be a *peculiar* people unto himself.' You see that these words respecting Israel of old exactly correspond to those here spoken of the redeemed Church, and they completely explain what is here meant by the word 'peculiar.' As Israel was a peculiar people, delivered from Egypt, and set apart unto God, so those who are in Christ Jesus are redeemed from the old bondage of their past lawlessness, and set apart as a special people unto Him who has redeemed them by His blood.

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Observe then the three characteristics of this new service, the service of the redeemed.

(1.) It is the service of the Redeemer Himself. In redeeming us from iniquity He makes us His own, and sets us apart unto Himself. If redeemed we belong to the Redeemer. We love Him, we follow Him, we serve Him, we are His.

(2.) It is a pure service.

He does not merely separate, but purifies us unto Himself. He carries on such a sacred work in the soul, and effects such a marvellous change that the words of St. John are realised, 'Every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure,' and that we even know something of the blessing which He described in the words, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

(3.) It is a zealous and active service.

If we are thus redeemed we are not to sit still, and quietly rejoice in a holy abandonment of soul; but we are to be up and doing. There is a great work to be done for God, and who is to do it if they are idle whom the Lord has redeemed? We want no slothful, listless, inactive, self-indulgent believers. Our missions are crippled for the want of help; and our work at home sometimes seems paralyzed by the lukewarmness of professors. But those who are brought near to God, and purified as a peculiar people unto Himself, must be filled with zeal for His service; for the lukewarm professor is a scandal to the Church of God. The object of the Lord's death was to call out a zealous people; and when there is no zeal, there is no effective result from the cross, for the purified people, redeemed by His grace, will, according to the text, be 'zealous of good works.'

Now all this is a work at this present time in progress. It is not, like the atonement, complete, but is going on now. It is at this present time in progress in the Church. The people who form the purchased possession are being daily gathered in to God. He has not yet accomplished the number of His elect. The body of Christ is not yet perfected, and our earnest desire is that day by day, yes, this very day, immortal souls may be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. So also is it progressive in the soul of each individual. We are not suddenly wafted into perfection, or made pure as Christ is pure. This chapter is a very clear proof of that, for while it speaks of the great purpose of the Lord's death, viz., to redeem us from all iniquity it is full of exhortations to all classes amongst us against practical misconduct. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that the deliverance is not yet complete. There is temptation around and temptation within; sin in the world and sin in our own hearts; corruption in society and corruption in our own nature; so that even after we have actually experienced redeeming grace, we may say, as St. Paul did, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. vii. 24.)

II. This leads to our second subject, the redemption power.

The redemption power is the Redeemer Himself, and so, as pointed out in a previous lecture, the Lord Jesus is called in Isaiah, lix. 20, 'the Redeemer,' and in the quotation of that passage Rom. xi. 26, 'the Deliverer.' And this applies whichever way you understand the words. If you apply them to the curse of sin it is He that delivers from that curse by the satisfaction of the law through His precious blood. He paid the ransom, and in the Father's name He has set us free. Or, if you apply it to the bondage of lawlessness, it is equally He that delivers, for it is just as much His office to release from the dominion of sin by the power of the Holy Ghost as it was to remove the curse. In either sense the passage brings Him before us as a present living Deliverer, not merely one who has given Himself for us, but one who is now engaged in actually delivering us from all iniquity and purifying unto Himself a peculiar people. The first clause, 'He gave himself for us,' describes His work on the cross finished at once and for ever; the latter part, 'That He might redeem us from all iniquity,' His present work as a risen and living Saviour, continuously employed in delivering and purifying His Church. Whatever we may think of the clause, 'that he might redeem us from all iniquity,' this is clearly the meaning of the words that He might 'purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' So that either way we are brought to the indisputable and most important lesson, that in our great struggle against sin, either without or within; either in the world or in our own hearts; and in our efforts to aim at the practical Christian life exhibited in this chapter, we may take the greatest possible encouragement from the fact that it is the present office of our living Lord to deliver and to purify. We may be profoundly conscious of the deep, inbred corruption of our own nature. We may know by bitter experience how often we have failed; we may be humbled to the dust at the thought of our shortcomings; we may be ready to say, as St. Paul did, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' but in the midst of it all we may look up in peaceful trust, and thank God for the delivering power that is in Christ Jesus, our risen and living Head. We may say as St. Paul did, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

But there is one thing which we must be sure to remember. The purifying power depends entirely on the reconciling blood. According to this text, in order that He might redeem and purify, He first gave Himself for us; or, in other words, in order that He might deliver, He first made satisfaction for sin by bearing its burden Himself. We may, therefore, be perfectly sure of this, that we shall never know His power as a deliverer unless we first know the power of His atonement. Not one amongst us could ever have been delivered if the curse of God had not first been removed, and that curse of God could never have been removed except by the fact that the Son of God became a curse for us. Till that was done there was no hope of deliverance, and till that is applied or appropriated there is no hope of personal holiness. Before the special, or peculiar, people could be purified unto Himself, they must be set free from the curse, and redeemed through the power of His blood. Not one of that people has the curse of God still resting on his soul, for so long as the curse remains it is perfectly impossible that any one of us should be one of the people. While, therefore, you trust in a Saviour living to deliver, be sure you keep well in view that same Saviour having died to atone. His life will be nothing to you unless you first know His death. You will never experience the power of His work in you until you realise His most gracious work completed for you on the cross. That blotting out of sin through the precious blood of the Lamb must lie at the foundation of all true holiness. It is the rock on which we stand, and unless there be a sure standing ground there is not the slightest hope of progress. If, therefore, you wish to press onward, and earnestly desire to be heart and soul holy to the Lord, and I am sure I am speaking to many that do, be sure you keep close to the great old

foundation truths. Trust your living Lord as your living Deliverer. Accept His promises of the Holy Spirit's power in all their fulness and throw yourself on Him for their complete fulfilment; but while you do so remember that the one power which in the purpose of God could remove the curse was the atoning blood, and the one hope of your being partaker of the deliverance rests altogether on the one fact that the great God our Saviour in boundless mercy gave Himself for you.

XIII. RESTORATION.

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'And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.'—LUKE, XXI. 28.

It is perfectly clear that the redemption alluded to in these words is something still future. It is the bright hope which is to cheer the little flock through the storms of the latter days. When the world is full of perplexity, and men's hearts are failing them for fear, the Lord's people are to look up in calm, happy, peaceful, trusting hope in the full assurance of their approaching redemption. 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.' It is perfectly clear, therefore, that our Lord was not speaking of the great redeeming act which took place eighteen hundred years ago on Calvary, but of the final deliverance, the completion of His redeeming work, when He will come in His kingdom and set His people free. This final deliverance must be our subject in this lecture. May the Lord bless it to our souls, and grant that, when the time comes, we may be amongst those who rejoice in the blessing!

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I. The redemption here spoken of is the deliverance of Jerusalem. We must not isolate the passage from its context, or forget that the words were spoken to Jewish believers. Thus up to the end of the 24th verse our Lord foretold the destruction of Jerusalem with the terrible afflictions that were to precede it, concluding with the words, 'Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.' Then follows the description of the latter days, and all the perils preceding the advent, concluding with the words, 'Look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.' Surely, then, there is a connexion between the 24th and 28th verses. The one describes the desolation, and the other the recovery: the one the bondage, the other the freedom; the one the captivity, the other the deliverance; the one the iron yoke on the neck of the captive, and the other the glorious restoration when the Deliverer shall appear in Zion.

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II. But though the passage refers to the restoration of Jerusalem, it clearly does not stop there, but includes the redemption or deliverance of the Church. When I speak of the Church I am not speaking of those who have nothing more than outward Christianity: but of the Church of the first-born, that Church described in the words, Eph. v. 25, 'Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' This Church is described in Eph. i. 14, as His 'purchased possession,' and all the members of it are now His own. They are His own by virtue of the ransom of the eternal covenant, and it is therefore called, Acts, xx. 28, 'The Church of God which he purchased with his own blood.' And they are His own by the call of the Holy Ghost, gathering them out from a wicked world, and by His divine power incorporating them into Christ. Thus in one sense they have been redeemed already, for the ransom has been given for their life, and they have found forgiveness through His precious blood. They may say, every one of them, as St. Paul did in the 7th verse of that same chapter in the Ephesians, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' But yet, according to the 13th verse, they are still waiting for redemption, and during the waiting time are solemnly sealed unto God, and assured of what is to come by the present earnest of the Spirit. 'In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise;' and so, in chap. iv. 30, they are told not to grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom they are 'sealed unto the day of redemption.' There is, therefore, hereafter to be a redemption of the purchased possession, a redemption of that which has already been redeemed, or, in other words, a final deliverance of the ransomed Church. The ransom is paid, but the time is not yet come for the ransomed Bride to be finally free, and presented to her Lord in glory.

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It is delightful to look forward to this coming restoration when we think of the present position of the Church of God surrounded as it is by a wicked world outside, and, what is far more painful, harassed by division, false doctrine, inconsistency, and formalism within. I am not surprised that St. Paul compares this present waiting time to the night, for there is a great deal all around us exceedingly dark, but we must never forget the approaching morning. We may be greatly distressed by witnessing such defects and difficulties as we do witness in the Church of Christ, but according to this passage we need not be disheartened, for our redemption draweth nigh. The Deliverer will soon come to Zion, and there will be no difficulties then. The Redeemer Himself will soon set all things straight. There will be complete light when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings. We are not, therefore, going to be downcast by difficulties, or to doubt His truth because we see His prophecies fulfilled; but, whatever happens, whether persecution from without, or false teaching within, we will remember His own most

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assuring words, and act on them, 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.'

III. It will be a redemption of the body. I need not stop to prove that the body is not yet free from the bondage of the curse. Though the soul is free in Christ Jesus the poor body is still subject as much as ever to the strong hand of death. So we read, Rom. viii. 10, 'If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.' So that, even when Christ is in us, and the Spirit is life, the body still remains dead, subject to death, and actually dying as we all well know. The brightest and holiest living believers are not exempt from the trials of a death-stricken body.

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But if this is the case with the living Church, how much more is it with the vast multitude of those who are now asleep in Jesus! Think of the noble line of the saints of God who were once, as we are, serving God on earth in the flesh, but who are now in the condition, to us quite inexplicable, of disembodied spirits, with the soul resting before God while the poor body in utter weakness lies prostrate in the grave. I cannot imagine a more marvellous contrast than that which now exists between the present condition of the two parts of man while awaiting the resurrection of the dead. It is impossible to imagine any thing more utter, more complete, more hopeless, than the bondage and subjection of the body; or more blessed, more peaceful, more joyous, than the present rest of the soul in the presence of the Lord Himself. But when the redemption takes place, as predicted in this verse, the body itself will be set free. You will see this in a moment if you connect two verses in Rom. viii. From ver. 10 we have already found that, even when the Spirit is life because of righteousness, the body is still dead because of sin; and the result is, as you read ver. 23, that even those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit groan within themselves. They share in respect of death the groaning of a death-stricken world. But in the midst of it all they can rise above it in triumphant hope, for they are waiting, and looking out for deliverance, as you read in the latter part of that verse, 'Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.' The body therefore shall be redeemed and rise again. They that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; and the very sea shall give up the dead that are in it. I know that men say it is impossible, and I know that there are difficulties connected with the subject which to the eye of man appear to prove its impossibility; but there is no such thing as impossibility with God. He who created can restore. He who said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, He can say 'Let there be life,' and there will be life. So that, although to us death is quite irresistible; though no wealth can ward it off, and no physician's skill can baffle it; and although, when once it has taken place, all human hope is gone for ever; yet, when the Redeemer comes to Zion, death itself will be powerless: those dear ones who now sleep in the grave will come forth in risen bodies at the bidding of their blessed Saviour; and He, the gentle, and loving, and tender Lord Jesus, will fulfil His grand prophecy as given by the prophet Hosea (xiii. 14), 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.'

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IV. There will be a redemption of the soul, *i.e.* a completion of that sacred work now being carried on in the soul through the power of the Holy Ghost. There is clearly a wide difference between the sacred work of deliverance as carried on in the body and the soul; for the deliverance of the body is not yet begun, but will be accomplished in one sudden act when the Lord shall appear. But it is not so with the soul; for in it the deliverance has been long since begun, and is day by day being carried out by the power of the Holy Ghost. Our blessed Lord has already delivered us, if we be in Him, both from the curse and dominion of sin: from the curse, for 'we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins;' and from the dominion, for 'sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace.' Rom. vi. 14. If, therefore, we are in Christ Jesus, and under grace, our soul is delivered from the dominion of sin, though our body is not yet delivered from the dominion of death. You may ask, then, how it is that the soul still wants deliverance? Look at the 12th verse of the sixth of Romans, only two verses before the one just quoted, and you read, 'Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should fulfil it in the lusts thereof.' It is, therefore, there, though it must not reign. It has life in it, and it is prepared to reign, but it must be put down. It has its lusts and desires, but they must be mortified, and not fulfilled. The power of sin is not extinct or quiescent, but in full vigour still. The old original corruption is not destroyed, but remains in full activity. The grace of God triumphs over it, but it is there; and there, not in a state of death, but of life and vigour. If you think you have done with sin you will find it will soon crop up, if in no other form, in pride of heart, and blindness to its power. We can therefore perfectly understand the complete harmony of the two verses in Rom. vii., that are sometimes thought contradictory: verse 6, in which he says, 'Now we are delivered from the law,' and verse 24, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' From the law, as involving the curse, we are already free; from the infection of a ruined nature we are still waiting to be delivered. And think for a moment what a deliverance that will be. Ye that have been deeply humbled at the discovery of your own utter unworthiness, ye that would describe yourselves as St. Paul did as 'the chief of sinners,' and 'less than the least of all saints,' think what it would be to be set at once absolutely free from indwelling sin. Picture to yourselves the day of His coming. Think of yourself on your knees in the morning, confessing sin, and praying for pardon and for help, for mercy and for grace. And then think of yourself at night, having in the course of the day beheld Christ as He is, and having been so transformed by the sight that you have become altogether like Him, without a single temptation or difficulty left, and with every stain and tendency to sin rooted out, and gone for

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ever. But this is what we are led to expect in these words of St. John: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' No wonder, then, that with such a hope in view our Lord directs us, even in the midst of the fears and perplexities of the latter days, to look up, and lift up our head, for our redemption draweth nigh.

But one thing we must remember. We shall never rejoice in the redemption or deliverance that is to come, till we can rest in the redemption or atonement that is complete. There are many amongst us, I sadly fear, who find no pleasure in the thought of the Lord's return, and in many cases there can be no doubt about the reason. They have found no peace through His cross. I believe that no one ever cares for the Lord Jesus Christ as a Deliverer from either death or sin till He knows Him as the Redeemer from the curse. No man can look up and lift up his head if he expects to rise again to the resurrection of damnation, and to be cast forth for ever with all the guilt of all His sin on his miserable head. Therefore it is that, till you know the atonement by blood, you will never care for the deliverance by power. Till you know the sufficiency of the ransom you are sure to dread the coming of the Deliverer, as, I fear, too many do. Look backwards, then, as well as forwards, I most earnestly entreat you. Accept the assurance of the coming deliverance in all its fulness. Accept it in all its joy. Rejoice in the blessed hope. But take care; and while you look forward in the hope that your redemption draweth nigh, remember also to look back on that finished atonement, and never rest till you can appropriate these words to the Ephesians, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.'

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One word before we close respecting the sacred feast of the Lord's supper, in which it is our sacred privilege as believers to gather round the table of our Lord. It is a connecting link between the two parts of redemption, the atonement and the deliverance, the cross and the advent. In it we look backwards and forwards, as we are taught 1 Cor. xi. 26: backwards, for we show the Lord's death; and forwards, for we do so 'till He come.' When He does so, we shall sit down with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and our symbolic service will cease in the realisation of the fulness of His blessing. Oh! how I pity those who are moved neither by memory or hope, by the recollection of what He has done, or the hope of what He is about to do; who never show the Lord's death according to His own appointment, and never act as if they were waiting for His coming!

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XIV. HEAVEN.

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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.'—REV. v. 9.

IN the preceding lectures it has been my privilege to direct attention to the important subject of redemption, and I think we cannot do better in closing the series than examine in this lecture what they think of it in heaven. They know there more than we do here, for they have passed within the veil, and they know by experience those great and most blessed results which we can only anticipate in faith. In their case sight has taken the place of hope, and through redeeming grace they are in actual enjoyment of the visible presence of God. Of course, therefore, they are better able than we can be to form a just estimate of what the Lord Jesus has done for their salvation. Let us then devote this morning to the study of what they think of redeeming love.

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We all know very well what a natural craving there is to look in beyond the veil, and to see what is passing amongst those who have already entered. What would we give for one half-hour's intercourse, or for even a telescopic view of that happy assembly now gathered before the throne? What would it be to us if for one short minute we could see the heavens opened? But something of this kind was permitted to St. John, as we read, chap. iv. 1, 'A door was opened in heaven,' and a voice said, 'Come up hither.' Immediately he was in the Spirit, and having entered he saw some of those very things which we long to see, but which no other living man has ever been able to see, and to report. St. Paul may have seen them when he was caught up to the third heaven, but if he did, he was not permitted to tell us what he saw. But St. John was expressly employed to do so. He was distinctly commanded to write the things which he had seen, and this book is the result.

What, then, did he see? He saw in the first place a throne, and on the throne one sitting. Round about the throne were twenty-four seats, and 'upon the seats four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.' But besides the elders there was a marvellous manifestation of spiritual life, inexplicable to us who have no experience of the life of a spirit without the body: for in chap. iv. 6, we read, that 'in the midst of the throne,' and round about the throne, were four living ones. These living ones were clearly in the most intimate relationship with the throne and with Him who sat on it. They were as near to it and to Him as was possible, for they were in the midst of it, and round about it, while in an outer circle stood a vast host of angels. From chap. v. 11, we see clearly that these angels were in an outer circle, not so near the throne as the living ones, for there we read: 'I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living ones, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.' In this description the only real difficulty is with reference to the elders and living ones, for we are not distinctly

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informed who they were. According to the reading of ver. 9 and ver. 10, as given us in our dear old English Bible, it appears perfectly plain that together they formed the company of those whose ransomed souls are now resting before the throne, for they said in their hymn, 'Thou hast redeemed *us* by thy blood . . . And hast made *us* unto our God kings and priests.' But there seems to be a doubt about that '*us*,' and, therefore, we must not rely too much on it. But on the whole there is reason to believe that the vast multitude of happy spirits now before God awaiting the resurrection, are represented by this inner circle of elders and living ones already brought as near as possible to the throne, and surrounded by the vast company of angels, who, having been sent forth to minister unto them during their pilgrimage, can rejoice without jealousy in their blessedness, even though they are placed in a position of greater honour than themselves.

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But our business in this lecture is not to discuss the persons seen in heaven, but rather to examine what they think of redemption, to learn how far their account of it agrees with our own, and to find in what estimation they hold the redeeming work.

I. Their account, or description of it. Does the account which they give in their hymn agree with the account which we have gathered from the rest of Scripture? I think it does exactly, and I would ask you to notice four points.

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(1.) They speak of redemption as a deliverance. We have found throughout the Word of God that to redeem is not merely to make atonement, but to deliver by means of a ransom. In all the passages that we have examined it has included the idea of actual deliverance. It has never been applied to the act of propitiation alone. Now turn to this hymn of the elders and living ones before the throne, and there you see precisely the same idea: 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.' There was an act of outgathering and ingathering. They were gathered out as a separate people from all nations of the earth, and gathered in to be a peculiar people unto God. The passage reminds us of those words in John, xi. 52, which teach us that the great object of the death of the Lord Jesus was, 'that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.' So this heavenly hymn describes them as being thus gathered in one before the throne.

(2.) It is a redemption through the most precious blood of the Lamb.

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The deliverance, or the gathering, is not simply an exercise of power, but is the result of atonement by blood. It is not merely the act of the Holy Ghost calling the sinner, but the act of God making atonement, or giving Christ to die for him. Before one soul could be drawn out from the ruin of the world, and gathered in to God, the barrier of the curse must be taken out of the way, and the law satisfied by its complete fulfilment in the Person of our Redeeming Head. Till the ransom was paid not one soul could be set free, and therefore the hymn says, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.'

(3.) They are raised to a position far above a mere pardon. We learned when we studied the case of Ruth that the redeemed are not merely delivered from ruin, but brought to a position of the highest possible honour, for the ransomed Church becomes the Bride of the Redeemer, and is identified with Christ Himself. So here you observe that the redeemed are not merely forgiven, but they are raised to new honours, new powers, new service, and new glory. 'Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.' I have not time to dwell on the sacred blessedness of that royal priesthood. It combines the honours of the king and the service of the priest. It is a kind of reflection of the double office of the Lord Himself, of whom it is said, 'He shall sit and rule upon his throne, and shall be a priest upon his throne.' The redeemed are made kings under Him to govern, and priests in Him, and through Him, to present a holy service unto God. Do not be satisfied, therefore, to let your mind dwell exclusively on the first elementary subject of forgiveness. I know the importance of it, and know well that there can be no such thing as peace until you can trust for a pardon. But I am speaking to those who can trust for forgiveness, who have learned the power of redeeming blood, and who are now resting in the assurance of the blotting out of sin. To them I say, Go forward, and accept your new position, acknowledge your high calling, carry out your royal priesthood, and never forget that you are anointed, and set apart as kings and priests unto God.

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(4.) This leads me to the fourth point, that we are redeemed unto God.

We found from the study of St. Paul's words to Titus that our most blessed Saviour redeemed us to be a peculiar, or special people unto Himself, so that all God's redeemed are sanctified, or set apart, unto Him. This is exactly what is taught in the hymn of heaven, for there we learn that we are redeemed, not merely from sin, but unto God. 'Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood.' 'We are made kings and priests unto God.' It is true of the believer, as it is of the Lord Jesus Himself, that 'In that he liveth he liveth unto God.' By atonement every barrier is broken down, and the way of access laid open even to the very throne of God Himself; and by the call of the Holy Ghost we are set apart unto God, to bear His name, to live as His sons, to do His will, to act as His witnesses, and to be as it were His representatives in the midst of a wicked world. We are not redeemed simply in order that we may be saved, but in order also that God may be glorified. As God's chosen people we are brought near to God Himself, in order that we may go forth into life, to glorify His name.

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II. It is clear, therefore, that the account given in heaven of the work of redemption is exactly the

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same as that which is taught us throughout the word of God. Let us pass on to consider what is the heavenly estimate of the sacred work, or in other words, What do they think of it there? What value do they set on it?

First. What do the elders and the living ones think of it? The chapter contains the description of a remarkable scene in connexion with a certain book, which was seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. A strong angel proclaims with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?' But 'no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.' There was something so sacred about it, that no man was found worthy even to look on it, and the result was that St. John wept much. Some people seem to care very little whether the book of God is closed or not; but he shed many tears when the sacred book seemed closed to his view. But one of those elders who sat around the throne said, 'Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.' So he beheld. He looked for the Lion, but when he looked there stood a Lamb, a Lamb as it had been slain, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer; and He came, and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. It was this that called forth this hymn of praise from the living ones, and that led them to sing 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.' Now observe that hymn, and note carefully what it was that in their sight constituted the worthiness of the Lamb. It was not His Divine Sonship; not His pre-existence as God; not His eternal and unspotted perfection; not His present exaltation to the right hand of the Father's throne: but it was the fact that, in order to redeem, He had been slain. It was the great act of redemption that gave Him a worthiness far beyond that of any other either in heaven or earth. He was honoured with an honour far above anything ever known, even in heaven, and the reason was that as a Redeemer He had died. If you ask, then, What is heaven's estimate of *redemption*? the answer is, That it is thought there to be so gracious, so wonderful, so divine, that it brings more honour to the Lord Jesus than all the other glories of His most glorious eternity.

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But what do the angels think of it? They are disinterested witnesses. If the living ones are the spirits resting before the throne, they have been saved by it; and, therefore, of course they have their deep personal interest in it. But it is not so with the angels. They never fell, so they have had no need of redemption, and can only regard it as a work wrought out for others. But there is no selfishness apparent in their spirit. I often think that the great charm of the angels' character is their complete unselfishness. So there was nothing selfish about their song, for though they were only lookers-on, or rather ministers, though they could not say, as we can, 'Thou hast redeemed us,' though not one of their number was saved through the redeeming blood, yet the whole vast multitude joined heart and soul in the adoration of redeeming mercy, and as soon as the hymn of the living ones was brought to a close, they all burst forth in their own song of praise, and said with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.'

But the worship did not stop even with them. St. Paul teaches us that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, for the whole is affected by the fall; and that a time is coming when, through redeeming grace, the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. No wonder, then, that creation itself is here represented as taking part in the joy of redemption. The whole creation is described as catching the spirit of praise. The living ones and the angels were not allowed to have a monopoly of thanksgiving, and, therefore, as soon as the angels' hymn was ended there was a grand outburst of praise from the whole creation of God: 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'

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And now, dear brethren, what shall we do? Shall we go home indifferent to the subject? Shall we, whose life depends altogether on redemption leave it as a thing uncared for? Shall there be no note of praise from us? Ye that know redeeming grace, shall there be no hymn of praise from you? Surely we must not wait till we see Him on the throne, and hear the hymn of the living ones. Those who are on earth according to this passage are to join in the chorus, so we will lose no time in doing so; and before we leave the church we will unite in the grand old hymn—

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'Come, let us join our cheerful songs
With angels round the throne;
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.

Worthy the Lamb that died, they cry,
To be exalted thus;
Worthy the Lamb our lips reply,
For he was slain for us.'

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