

A Peculiar People

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, June 24, 1860

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:14

There is a common, and, if true, a very serious objection brought against the distinguishing truths of the gospel—what are commonly called the doctrines of grace; which is, that they naturally and necessarily lead to licentiousness; and that for this reason it is exceedingly dangerous to believe or profess them, and of course, by implication, more dangerous still to preach them. If this objection be well founded, under what an awful responsibility must I lie! for I have believed, professed, and preached these very doctrines for more than thirty years. If, then, these doctrines which I have preached for so long a period naturally and necessarily lead to licentiousness, and are therefore imperilling men's immortal souls, what have I been doing all these years but poisoning the very springs of life? and, as my sermons and writings have obtained a considerable circulation, I have been sending abroad far and wide what can only issue in the ruin of my hearers and readers, and as far as I am personally concerned, to my own disgrace here, and my own destruction hereafter? The Chinese are said to poison the wells at which our troops are likely to drink. But what is their crime compared with mine if they but destroy men's bodies, and I by poisoning the wells of truth destroy men's souls? We must either, then, meet and overthrow this objection, or fall under it and admit it to be true. If we admit it to be true, we must at once give up these doctrines; for all are agreed that a holy God cannot have revealed unholy doctrines; all must

acknowledge that no view or sentiment, creed or confession, came from God which naturally and necessarily leads to sin. So that if the objection be true and well sustained that our views and sentiments, our doctrines or experience lead to sin, and by necessary consequence cannot have been revealed in the inspired Scriptures, our best, and indeed our only safe or honest course will be, as soon as possible, to confess our sin and forsake it; to cast these doctrines which I have preached and you believed so many years to the winds, and publicly acknowledge before the church and the world your sin in ever having believed them, and I especially mine in having for so many years taught and preached them. But through mercy, the objection cannot be sustained; and we will endeavour, with God's blessing, to show that it must fall to the ground if viewed with an enlightened eye and weighed in a spiritual balance.

But the first question to be decided is, Are those doctrines in the word of God, or are they not? Are they, as some assert, doctrines of man's invention, mere perversions of a few isolated passages, or strained interpretations of some metaphorical expressions, contrary to the grand tenor and general drift of the Scriptures, or has the Holy Spirit written them there as with a ray of light, so that he that runs may read them, if he run as those that run for eternal life, if he read them as those read whose eyes are anointed with an unction from above? I believe he has written them so plainly and clearly that the veriest babe in grace may, under the teaching of the blessed Spirit, see them shining as with a heavenly glory through the whole Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Thus, if the doctrines of grace be plainly revealed in the word of God,—and none can deny this who have seen them there written, and felt their power in their heart,—the objection does not fall upon us who believe them or upon me who preach them, but upon God himself who has revealed

them. Therefore, objector, answer it to God; it is against God you are fighting—against God you are spitting forth the venom of your enmity. The slaver may reach us, but it is the enmity of your mind against these truths themselves that prompts you to give it vent.

But these doctrines may be abused, and not only may be, but frequently are so. Ungodly men may adopt them as a creed, or even as a mask and a cover for all manner of sin and hypocrisy. This is one way whereby Satan often seeks to bring them into reproach. When, then, men plainly see that some who profess these doctrines lead very inconsistent lives, instead of attributing the sins which they so plainly observe to the man's own corruption and hypocrisy, they cast the charge of ungodliness upon the doctrines themselves. But this, though common, is very unfair reasoning. The abuse of a thing is no argument against its use. Is not health abused by many to the gratification of their own base lusts? Is not strength abused to deeds of violence? Is not money abused to pride and licentiousness? Is not food abused to gluttony? Is not wine abused to drunkenness? But are not these good in themselves, though man abuses them? Nay, has God given man any good gifts in providence which may not be and are not daily abused? So the doctrines of grace may be and are abused. But because ungodly men may make an ungodly use of that which is in itself pure and holy, that is no objection against the doctrines themselves. I will go a step further and say that there is no holiness without them; that not only do they not lead to licentiousness, but they so lead and are so indispensable to holiness that there can be no real holiness independent of them.

But not to detain you longer upon this introduction to our subject, what says our text in reference to this point? Has

that no voice which speaks in favour of my assertion? Does that bear no testimony to their truth? What are the express words of the Holy Ghost by the pen of Paul in the passage before its? Speaking of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he declares that he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Who, then, can say that Christ gave himself for us that we might live *in* iniquity, when he came to redeem us *from* it? Who can say that we should not be zealous of good works, when he came to purify unto himself a peculiar people who should be zealous of them? But these things will be more apparent if the Lord enable me to open up the words as I seem in some measure to see a light upon them.

I.—*First*, the *gift* of our Saviour Jesus Christ, "*who gave himself for us.*"

II.—*Secondly*, the *object* for which he gave himself, "*that he might redeem us from all iniquity.*"

III.—*Thirdly*, the *effect* of an experimental knowledge of that redemption, that he *thereby purifies unto himself "a peculiar people."*

IV.—*Fourthly*, the *mark and character* of that peculiar people thus purified, that they are "*zealous of good works.*"

I.—Admire with me how the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Paul, here traces the whole work of redemption and the whole work of purification up to the *gift of our Saviour Jesus Christ*. And do observe what a blessed fulness there is in the expression, he "*gave himself for us.*" May we not with all holy reverence lift our eyes up to heaven and look at our most blessed Lord as he stood up in the councils of eternity, and

there view by living faith how freely he gave himself for us before the foundation of the world, that in due time he might do the work that the Holy Ghost in our text has declared he came to do? He is thus beautifully represented (Prov. 8) under the name of "Wisdom" as "daily his Father's delight, rejoicing always before him;" and with a prospect of his future work upon earth, as even then "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth and his delights with the sons of men." But this was "before the mountains were settled; while as yet he had not made the earth nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world." (Prov. 8:25, 20, 30, 31.) We read, therefore, that God "chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4); and the gracious Lord says to the sheep on his right hand, "come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34.) But in viewing these eternal transactions of love and grace, we should at the same time take a glance at what the Church of God was before the Adam-fall. We must view her not as fallen but as unfallen, not as involved in sin and ruin, but as a pure and spotless bride given by the Father to his dear Son to be his spouse. Of this Eve was a type, who was brought and given to Adam in all her spotless innocency; married to him before, not after the fall. Thus the Lord himself pleads with the Father in that blessed prayer which he offered up shortly before his crucifixion:—"I have manifested thy name unto the men which then gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me;" and again, "I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." (John 17:6, 10, 11.) That this gift is not to be restricted to the Lord's immediate disciples is plain from his own words afterwards, where he prays for the whole body of his people in similar terms:—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with the where I am, that they

may behold my glory which thou has given me." (John 17:24.) The Lord tells his heavenly Father that those whom God had given him were first his own. "Thine they were." They were his by creating design, as foreshadowed in the eternal mind before they had birth or being; his as chosen in Christ, their covenant head; his as presented by him unto the Son of his love, to be his spouse, his bride, his inheritance, in whom he should be eternally glorified. As such, then, the mind and will of the Son being one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he received the church as God's special and peculiar gift. The affections of his heart flowed forth towards her, and she became his in so special a way that he could say of every member of his mystical body, "All mine are thine and thine are mine;" and again, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:23.)

But this bride and spouse of Christ, though thus betrothed to him and made one with him by eternal ties, fell in the Adam-fall from this primeval purity, and of which Eve in her native creation was but an imperfect figure. She thus lost all her original beauty and innocency, and sank at once into the depths of sin, misery, and woe; for the whole of the church being in the loins of Adam, sinned in and with Adam, and was dragged down with and by him into that pit of ruin into which his feet sank. This may seem hard doctrine; but how else can you explain the sin and misery which there is in the world? Does not the apostle say, "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that [or as we read in the margin "in whom"] all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12); and does he not say, "In Adam all die?" (1 Cor. 15:22.) Then if death passed upon all men through Adam's sin, and all die in him, must not the church have sinned in Adam and died in Adam? But how was she to be brought out of this horrible pit of sin and death, misery and wretchedness, into which she had so awfully fallen? How

again was she to be a spotless spouse and fitting bride for the Lord the Lamb? How could she show her face in the courts of heaven after this transgression? How could she appear before the bright and holy angels as the glorious bride of the Son of God, when she had sunk into such depths of sin and death, been covered with all the filth of the Adam-fall, and become polluted to the inmost core by being a participator in his guilt and transgression? For let us not think there is any such thing as a half-way fall, as a little fall. The fall of Adam was to the lowest depth, not indeed of actual crime, but of ruined human nature, for in it he lost the image of God, became the slave of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins. There was but one way, and that way, when made known to the soul, fills it with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And that way, when it will be made fully manifest at the great day as the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose, will display both to the ransomed millions and the bright angelic hosts such depths of infinite wisdom, grace, and love as will fill heaven itself with holy and eternal amazement. This wondrous way of wisdom and love was that the Son of God should freely give himself out of his Father's bosom, in which he had lain from all eternity, and take our nature into union with his own divine Person, by assuming the flesh and blood of the children. But in so doing, it involved the necessity that he should give himself freely unto all the sufferings and sorrows which were required by infinite justice to work out a sufficient and perfect obedience; that he should therefore endure the penalty the Church had incurred, and by standing in her place as her Surety and Representative might do what she never could have done and bear what she never could have borne. It was in this way, and in this way alone, that he could reconcile her to God; that washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit, she might once more lift up her head without external spot or inward blemish, free from sin

without and within, in the courts of heavenly bliss.

II.—But we pass on now to show *the object* for which Jesus gave himself, *that he might redeem her from all iniquity*.

Could there have been any other way of her redemption but this, we cannot but suppose that God would have discovered and accomplished it. If it had been possible for the church of God to have been redeemed from all iniquity by any other price than the sufferings and bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can hardly for a moment think that God would have given up the Son of his love—not "spared" him, as the apostle speaks. We may, I think, then, lay it down for a certain truth were any other plan feasible, such a plan would have been designed and accomplished. And, conversely, as no other plan was adopted, and no other way revealed but the giving of Christ for us, that in the mind of God this was the only way whereby we could be redeemed from all iniquity.

But let us look for a few moments at the word *redemption*: it is a word of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, and conveys a meaning of blessed import. It has indeed various significations in the word of truth, but all implying that the person redeemed is sunk into a certain lost and miserable condition; and the central idea round which all the other ideas group themselves is "one made captive in battle." You are aware how in ancient times devastating armies over-ran different lands, the object being not merely plunder, but to carry off captives; and as these captives were not put to death but were made slaves, a state of captivity is the leading idea, and that of servitude springs out of it. Take this idea into spiritual things. Thus it was Sin that devastated Paradise: Sin was the mighty conqueror that broke into the garden of Eden and carried Adam and Eve captive. And when sin had taken our first parents captive, it dragged them into slavery; made them slaves to do the foulest work, and

employed them on the basest errands. A slave has no will of his own. His master's will is his will. Whatever work his master bids him do he must do it. He cannot, as a hired servant, leave his master for a better employer or higher wages. He is a slave for life, ground down with an iron yoke and unable to deliver himself—a slave till death, or till he is in some way set free. So were we not merely made captives in the Adam-fall—not merely taken by the sword and bow of that potent conqueror, Sin—not merely dragged out of a happy, innocent Paradise into all the misery and wretchedness of this thorny, briery world, but made slaves to sin, and, worse than that, to sin's master, Satan, that foul fiend, that accursed spirit, whose enmity against God is so desperate, that if there ever be joy in his heart, it is to have debased the image of God in the soul of man, and still to employ him in doing the foulest errands, until he degrades him more and more fully into his own likeness.

But the idea of redemption includes more than that of captivity and slavery. It includes the idea of *debt* also; for in ancient times, when a man could not pay his debts, as we find in the case of the widow of one of the sons of the prophets in the time of Elisha, the creditor might take him, or if he were dead, his sons to be bondmen. So that in those days if he could not pay in purse he must pay in person; if he could not discharge the debt, he must become the slave of the creditor. But from this he might be redeemed by the payment of the debt. So it is in the things of God. Redemption implies not merely deliverance from a state of captivity and servitude, but also from a state of debt. What debt? The debt we owe to God's justice. Our being entangled in the Adam-fall has not set us free from the law of God; debt is no acquittance. A man cannot, even as regards the laws of his country, by breaking them free himself from them. So as regards the law of God, a man cannot say, "I will

break through all laws and trample upon all commandments, and then the law can have no power over me." This would be adding sin to sin, defying God to his face, hurling defiance up to the very gates of heaven. We are still then as sinners amenable to the law; for it has not relaxed any of its stringent demands; it still pronounces and still will execute its awful sentence: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. 3:10.) And as the ancient creditor seized the debtor who could not pay his debt and carried him to prison; so the law will arrest every one found under it; and if the debt cannot be paid—and how can he pay it?—he will be shut up in hell until he pays the uttermost farthing.

And then there comes the grand climax and the ultimatum of all, which is *death*; for that was the originally threatened penalty. So that viewing men as sunk into a state out of which he has to be redeemed, we may look at him as a captive dragged away from his native land, as Adam was dragged out of Paradise; made the wretched slave of a harsh, impecunious taskmaster, who holds him in bondage and servitude, and keeps him there till death comes to close the scene, which is but the opening gate to the second death, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

How feeble are all conceptions, how inadequate all words, how meagre all expressions to paint to the life what you and I and every man is as involved in the original transgression, and as having added to original sin the guilt and weight of our own actual crimes! O that a sense and feeling of this might deeply sink into our minds! O that it were written, as with the point of a diamond, upon our hearts! For sure I am that we shall never properly value redeeming love, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and the gift of the Son of God

until we have known experimentally the slavery of sin, and groaned as poor captives under the dominion of Satan. Till the iron has entered our very soul; till the fetters have galled our feet and the manacles our wrists, and we can look up to God and point to our bleeding wounds as inflicted by sin, Satan, and the law, we can never truly feel our need of or really value the redemption that has been accomplished by the suffering Son of God. But O, what a blessed change it is when the first ray of mercy breaks in upon the soul, and cheers the poor captive, who, like the prisoners in the dungeons of Naples, or those who have been just set free in Sicily, may have been groaning for years in the low dungeon. Let us compare him for a moment with those victims of tyranny who have been lately liberated. Our very heart bleeds to think of them as they lay in those miserable holes under the pressure of their irons, half starved, covered with rags, their bodies foul with filth, and half eaten up by vermin. How rejoiced must they have been to hear the prison gates giving way, and to see through the broken doors beams of the light of day shining into their dark cells, and to listen to the voice of their liberators cheering them to wait for a few moments till they should be released. Yet even their state and even their liberation are but faint emblems of the prisoners of hope, of the captives whom Christ's redemption sets free. For, like the poor Sicilian prisoners, we are, as under condemnation and arrest, shut up in our dungeon cells, half starved, covered with filth and loathsome with vermin—the vermin of sin. But O to have the light of day breaking in through the prison doors, and to hear sounds from above of pardon and peace and blessed liberation,—is not this enough to make the poor prisoner's heart leap for joy within him? But was not this the express commission given to the blessed Lord? Was he not specially anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound? (Isai. 61:1.) Yes, it is he who breaks

in pieces the gates of brass and cuts asunder the bars of iron. (Isai. 45:2.) But O in what a way! Not by the arm of violence, but by the heart of suffering; not by the hand of strength, but by the hand of weakness nailed to the cross. For our prison is not a prison of stone but of sin; and could, therefore, only be broken up by Jesus being made sin for us who knew no sin. (2 Cor. 5:21.) He, therefore, gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity. Now, in thus redeeming us, in order that that redemption should become effectual, he must either have given a certain price equivalent to the debt, or he must have given himself. Redemption in ancient times could not be accomplished but in one of these two ways: the prisoner must be set free either by full value given for him, or else by the person who came to redeem him taking his place. Thus Judah offered to take the place of Benjamin that he might go free. "Now therefore I pray thee let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondsman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren." (Gen. 44:33.) So the Lord Jesus Christ must either come in his own person and take our place, or else he must pay a certain value that the prisoner under the law might go free. Blessings be upon his name! A crown of glory adorn his brow! He did both. *First* he paid the *price* in full. God held the law in his rigid fingers, and weighed the curse in one hand and the blood of his own dear Son in the other; for "we are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." God, the infinitely just and righteous God, held the scales with unerring hands, and when the blood was put into one and our sins into the other, the blood was found to be double for all our sins, according to the testimony of the prophet. "Cry unto her that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." And well might it be double, for it was the blood of the darling Son of God, and thus all the virtue and validity of Godhead was in it. Then the law in a

moment gave up its claims; then all the debt was at once discharged, and the millions of sins of millions of sinners were all put away, blotted out, cancelled, removed, cast behind God's back, and drowned in the depths of the sea, as that precious blood fell from the hands and feet and side of Jesus upon Calvary's cruel tree. He thus redeemed us by paying down the full price, as we read—"Ye are bought," that is, redeemed "with a price." (1 Cor. 6:20.) The law could not say "Not yet! not yet! The debt is not paid; the crimes are too great, the sins too black, the iniquity too foul. I want more! It is not enough yet!" But the law said at once "It is enough!" for what could exceed in value the blood of the Son of God, who himself is God? The blood of an angel, could an angel have taken flesh; the blood of a seraph, could a seraph have been incarnate; the blood of an archangel, could an archangel have become man, would not have been enough. The law could have said, "Thou art but a creature, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel: God requires all thine obedience; it is not enough." But who can require that *God* should render obedience? Who can demand that Deity should suffer, bleed, and die? When Deity, then, did suffer, bleed, and die, eternal Justice itself must cry "Enough!" But our Lord paid in *Person* as well as in blood; for we may draw a distinction between the Person of the God-Man and the blood which he shed as such; for he suffered but once on the cross, but was obeying the law in his Person during the whole time of his sojourn here below; and it was the dignity of his Person that gave efficacy to his atoning blood. He stood, therefore, as it were, between the wrath of God and his people; and it was as if by so doing he said, "Let the law discharge all its curses upon me. Here is my head: let the lightning fall; I bare my brow. Let the wrath of God come upon me, that my sheep may go free." It fell. For in this sense "the Lord bowed the heavens and came down, and it was darkness under his feet. The voice of his thunder was in the heaven, the lightnings

lightened the world, the earth trembled and shook;" for we know that as a token of God's displeasure against sin in the Person of Christ, the very sun withdrew its light and the earth shook. But when the blessed Lord had thus endured the wrath of God by suffering in Person, it was enough; and he himself proclaimed with expiring voice, "It is finished." Then, and not till then, he gave up the ghost; God had accepted him and his offering; and, as a proof of his full satisfaction and his holy approbation, he raised him from the dead and seated him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

Now it may be, and I hope it is so, that some of you have seen and felt yourselves at various times some of the foulest, filthiest, blackest, most polluted wretches that God suffers to crawl upon his earth: for though your lives may have been, and I hope are, free from outward spot, and you are made to walk in the fear of God, yet the shining in of divine teaching has discovered to you the depths of your fallen nature. If this be the case, the word "iniquity" is not too strong an expression for you; for you know it to be true. Your main concern, the spring of your chief anxiety, arises from this—not that the blood of Jesus Christ is not able to cleanse from all iniquity, for you have seen its sufficiency and suitability; but misgivings, doubts, and fears at times work very powerfully in your mind whether your iniquity has been purged by that blood; for it is in your eyes so great, so aggravated, so abounding, so unceasing, that apprehension seizes hold of your mind, and your conscience is painfully exercised clearly and fully to know whether that sin of yours can be, has been put away. You have, therefore, no objection to make against the price not being sufficient; you have no doubt whether the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. But your doubt is, and will be till God has blessedly satisfied your soul by speaking words of peace and pardon to

your conscience, whether you, even you, are washed in that precious blood; whether you are clothed in that justifying righteousness, and whether, when Jesus died upon the cross, he bore your individual sins in his own body upon the tree.

But how comprehensive is the expression "to redeem us from all iniquity;" iniquity in heart, iniquity in lip, iniquity in life. And we may observe that there are five things as regards iniquity from which the blessed Lord came to redeem us; its guilt, its filth, its power, its love, and its practice. By his blood he redeemed us from its guilt; by the washing of regeneration he delivers us from its filth; by the power of his resurrection he liberates us from its dominion; by revealing his beauty he frees us from its love; and by making the conscience tender in his fear he preserves us from its practice.

III.—But we now pass on to consider our third point: *the effect* of the Lord's thus giving himself. It was not only to redeem us from all iniquity, but *to purify unto himself a peculiar people*. Redemption and purification go together. Holy John had a view of the wounded heart of his suffering Lord, and he saw two distinct things issue from that heart when pierced by the Roman spear: one was blood, the other was water. Hart has sweetly explained the connection:—

This fountain so dear he'll freely impart;
Unlock'd by the spear, it gushed from his heart,
With blood and with water; the first to atone,
To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one.

The blood was shed to atone for sin, and the water gushed from the wounded heart as a fountain of sanctification. Thus purification is connected with redemption, for the same pierced heart that poured forth blood to atone, poured forth

water to sanctify. Here, then, we meet triumphantly the objection that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness. What is the leading doctrine of grace? That Jesus died that chosen sinners might live; that he shed his atoning blood for a peculiar people. That is the leading truth of the gospel. Now see how sanctification and purification are connected with redemption; for he redeemed them for the very express purpose that they might be a peculiar people; peculiar in this, that they should be God's people, and as such not only be redeemed by the blood of Christ but sanctified and made holy by his Spirit and grace. Is it not a libel, then, upon our most holy faith, upon the doctrines of grace, to say or even think that the water which issued from the broken heart of Jesus has less power than the blood; that he who gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity should allow us still to lie in our foulest sin: should redeem us from iniquity, and we still be in it; should deliver us from all evil, and we still wallow in it? When the Bastille was taken at the first French revolution, there was found in that terrible prison an old person who had been there forty years, and the man, whose locks were grey with age, could not be induced to leave his cell. He had become so habituated to the dark, that he preferred darkness to light; and he was such a stranger to the unknown world, that his grief was to be forced once more to come abroad into it. So there are many persons in Satan's bastille who would not, if they could, come out of the dark cell, for they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, and would sooner grovel there amidst their native filth than be washed from their pollutions. This is just the case with the common tramps, to whom the greatest punishment is the Union bath. Cut off their matted locks, wash their dirty flesh; it is purgatory to them. So there are those who gladly riot in the pollutions of sin, who love the darkness of the cell, and hug themselves in the filth with which they are covered. But the Sicilian prisoners who have

been lately liberated were not like these, or the man who had been shut up forty years in the Bastille. They were glad enough to come out into the light of day; to change their prison dress and prison fare, and be restored to light and liberty; for their dark cell had not quenched their love of freedom. So the poor child of God, to whom a thirst for freedom has come, can be satisfied with nothing but the light of day, and that happy liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. The great mass of men have no desire for freedom. In the southern states of America, there are slaves so contented with their servitude that they would not accept freedom as a gift; nay, they look with the greatest contempt upon the free black man, and hug themselves in their slavery, as glorying in being a wealthy man's property. So the servitude of sin and Satan has so debased in all natural men the love of freedom, that they would sooner be slaves of sin than Christ's free men. As the wretched drunkard would sooner on a summer's eve get into a low pot-house, with a foaming cup and a pipe and the filthy conversation of his boon companions, than walk in the summer fields, inhaling the pure summer air, and recreating himself, as sober people do, in the cool evening breeze; thus sin has so debased the mind of man, so thrust its black brand into his inmost soul, that he is much happier in sin than in holiness. But not so with the saint of God. A new nature, a new spirit has been breathed into his soul, which makes him groan under the slavery of sin and long to be free. Even naturally there is sometimes kindled in the bosom of a slave an inextinguishable desire after freedom. And O, the love of freedom! We in this country are all happily free. Slavery cannot live in England's free air. It is our birthright to be free men. Liberty burns as a pure flame in an Englishman's bosom. We cannot conceive what it is to be a willing slave under a task master, to be satisfied with the food and clothing provided for us, and not have a will of our own. So

when the flame of liberty has once been kindled in the bosom of a slave, what then can satisfy him but to be made free? To obtain this, he will break through a thousand obstacles, and run the risk of a thousand dangers, for he feels that he must be free or die. Many a poor slave has chosen death rather than return to servitude. So in grace. The Holy Spirit kindles in the breast of the child of God a love of freedom; makes him groan and sigh under the slavery of sin. He once was sin's willing slave; but he can bear that yoke no longer. He must be free: he longs to inhale the air of freedom; he cannot, will not live as he has done; sin is such a burden to his conscience that he hates both it and himself, loathes his slavery and himself as being a slave. Now this is the first dawn of light upon his mind, the first kindling of the Spirit of grace in his heart. If he die, he must make the attempt, if he swim rivers, if he scale mountains, if he incur death in the attempt, he can no longer bear the yoke of servitude. Have you not in this manner felt the slavery of sin, and sighed, groaned, and panted to be delivered from it? When you have been entangled in it and made a captive by it, have you not abhorred yourself? How we look back sometimes to our past sins, and hate them and ourselves for them. It is by these inward feelings that we learn the miserable bondage of sin and long for a full deliverance from it. Now Christ came to set you free from all this miserable slavery, to redeem you by his precious blood from this bondage, darkness, doubt and fear, and to purify you to himself, that as washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit, you might be eternally his. If, then, you have been as I have been describing, wretched and miserable under the burden of sin and longing to be free from it, will you not gladly hail any friendly beam of light that gives you hope of a full and perfect deliverance from your wretched servitude?

1. Now comes then the *purification*. Under the law, persons

and things which had become ceremonially defiled, were purified in several ways, and especially four: by blood, by fire, by water, and by oil. First, there was purification by *blood*, as the apostle tells us, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) And you recollect, I dare say, when the high priest was consecrated to his high office, blood was put upon his ear, his hand, and his right foot, as well as sprinkled upon his garments. (Exod. 29:20, 21.) In the case of the leper also there was blood applied at the time of his cleansing, for by blood applied to him in the same way as to the high priest his leprosy was purged. So it is in grace. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," not merely by virtue of the atonement made by it on the cross, but by virtue of its being sprinkled upon the conscience. It is therefore called "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel;" and the apostle says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works." (Heb. 9:14; 12:22.) In this way the blessed Lord purifies not only the persons of his people, but their consciences to serve the living God. Jesus thus purifies by blood. But when the blood of sprinkling comes from his gracious hand, what is the effect? First, it purifies *the eyes of the understanding*. The eyes of the understanding are by nature held in darkness, but when the blood of the covenant touches them, they are enlightened to see the efficacy of that blood, as the scales fell from Paul's eyes when Ananias touched him. And as divine sight comes through the hearing of faith, this was typified by the application of blood to the ear of the leper; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Next comes the purifying of the *conscience* which is guilty under the load of sin and dead works, from which spring bondage, doubt and fear. Then, with the conscience, there follows next the purifying of the *affections*,

which need to be purged from fleshly idols and creature objects, that they may be set upon things above. Upon this follows the purifying of the *lips*, according to the experience of Isaiah, where the seraph flew to take a coal off the brazen altar, and by its application, purged his lips. The live coal was taken from off the brazen altar—a type of Christ's sacrifice. And thus, when there is a blessed discovery to the conscience of Christ's atoning blood, it turns the lips to speak a pure language, no longer a mixture of half Ashdod but the pure language of Canaan—to praise and extol free grace without any dash of legality.

But there is also the purification by *fire*. When spoil was taken in war by the children of Israel, there were according to God's command two ways of purifying it: every thing that could abide the fire was purified by fire, but what could not abide the fire, was to go through the water. (Num. 31:23.) So it is in grace: there is the fire, the furnace that God has appointed in Zion, and in that, all faith and hope and love must be put. In this fire the dross and tin are consumed, and God's work upon the soul is separated from all counterfeit metal. So we read, "When the Lord shall have purged away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning." (Isai. 4:4.)

But there is also purification by *water*. Thus, the high priest, on the great day of atonement, washed himself in water, both before and after he had taken the blood into the most holy place; and so he that let go the scape-goat, was commanded "to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water." (Lev. 16:24, 26.) Thus also when the Levites were taken from among the children of Israel for the service of the sanctuary, God said to Moses, "Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them wash their clothes, and so make

themselves clean." (Num. 8:7.) In a similar way, all ceremonial defilements were purified by the water in which the ashes of the red heifer were sprinkled; for we read of it that it was kept for "a water of separation; it is a purification for sin." (Num. 19:9.) All this was typical of the purifying water of the blessed Spirit, whereby the church is cleansed, as the apostle speaks, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26); "and this is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:6.)

Then again, there is purification by *oil*; for it was by this applied to the ear, the hand, and the foot that both the high priest was consecrated, and the leper purified.

In these four ways, therefore, does the Lord purify unto himself "a peculiar people:" by blood, by fire, by water and by oil—blood to sprinkle the conscience, fire to burn away the dross, water to cleanse the heart, and oil, the unction of the Spirit, to soften and make supple the affections! And all these four go together. None can be dispensed with, for each has its peculiar work and gracious effect.

2. But if the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and thus purify us unto himself, it was for a certain end—that we might be "*a peculiar people*;" "a people that dwelleth alone, and is not numbered with the nations." The word literally means a people for a possession, and has not the Lord said of them, "This people I have formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise?" (Isai. 43:21.) It is as if he bought them and formed them, that he might look down from heaven his dwelling-place upon his saints on earth, and say "These are my people and I am their God. These are the people for whom I gave myself out of the bosom of my Father, in which

I lay from all eternity as his co-equal, co-eternal Son, in blissful communion with himself and the Holy Ghost. And I gave myself for them that they might be eternally mine, to glorify me upon earth, and to be for ever with me in heaven." If, then, the blessed Lord "gave himself that he might redeem us from *all* iniquity," its guilt, its filth, its love, its power, its practice; from all iniquity, without and within, past, present, and to come; from sins of omission and sins of commission; iniquities as high as the loftiest mountains, as deep as the deepest seas; are we not bound by every sweet constraint of dying love to live to his praise? If he came for this express purpose that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and is now looking down from heaven his dwelling-place, having gone back to his Father's bosom, with eyes of pity and affection upon us as "the travail of his soul," and is separating us by his grace from this wicked world and from our no less wicked selves, what a load of obligation lies upon us to live to his glory! Shall his people have been redeemed by such sorrows and such sufferings from all iniquity, and then continue to live in sin? Shall he have suffered such cruel agonies of body and soul, that they might trample upon his wounds, and instead of repaying him with gratitude and obedience, repay him with that which his soul abhors? How can any one who knows anything of the blessedness of atoning blood and redeeming love and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit continue in sin that grace may abound? Doctrinal professors may do these things, for a mere letter knowledge of the truth brings with it no deliverance from the power of sin; but the living soul, in whom the God of all grace is carrying on his gracious work,— can it trample under foot the cross of the suffering Son of God? It is impossible that a man who knows for himself the redeeming efficacy of Christ's atoning blood, and whose conscience is made tender in the fear of God, can, under the sweet influence of his love, deliberately crucify him again.

Not but what there is a falling under the power of sin and temptation, as David and Peter fell; but there will not be a wilful sinning against him, when the blessed Spirit is bringing near his blood and grace and love. May we never forget that the suffering Son of God gave himself to purify unto himself a peculiar people—a people whose *thoughts* are peculiar, for their thoughts are the thoughts of God, as having the mind of Christ; a people whose *affections* are peculiar, for they are fixed on things above; whose *prayers* are peculiar, for they are wrought in their heart by the Spirit of grace and supplication; whose *sorrows* are peculiar, because they spring from a spiritual source; whose *joys* are peculiar, for they are joys which the stranger intermeddleth not with; whose *hopes* are peculiar, as anchoring within the veil; and whose *expectations* are peculiar, as not expecting to reap a crop of happiness in this marred world, but looking for happiness in the kingdom of rest and peace in the bosom of God. And if they are peculiar in *inwardly*, they should be peculiar *outwardly*. They should make it manifest that they are a peculiar people by walking in the footsteps of the Lord the Lamb, taking up the cross, denying themselves, and living to the honour, praise, and glory of God. What has given so much force to the objection against the doctrine of grace as the ungodly lives of its professors? The strongest argument you can present to the unbelieving world in favour of the doctrines which you profess is a godly life. Let them see by your good works that you *do* adorn the doctrine, that you do bear fruits; and make it manifest by your conduct, in your family, in your business, in the whole of your life and deportment, that your religion bears upon it the stamp of inward and outward holiness. This will be your best answer to the charge that your doctrines lead to licentiousness. Let them all be able to look at you and say, "Here is a man professing these doctrines; yet where shall we find one so distinguished for honesty, integrity, uprightness, liberality,

kindness—for everything, in short, that adorns the gospel of Jesus Christ?"

IV.—To come to our last point, you must, if you belong to this peculiar people, "*be zealous of good works;*" not doing them grudgingly, not eking out a tardy, forced obedience, as though you hated Christ's yoke, and only bore it through a slavish fear of hell; but as full of holy warmth and earnest zeal, mourning that your good works are so few, yet making it manifest that you are zealous of them. But it may well be said, "Where shall we go to find a people like this? Far and near, over hill and dale, sea and river, may we look, and look till our eyes fail, before we shall see a people corresponding to this description." Yet there have been such a people. There were such in the days of the New Testament, and there have been such even in our own land; but in our degenerate times, where are we to "find a peculiar people" zealous of good works as described in the text? Are good works even mentioned or insisted upon in the ministry of the present day, and are they not thought rather to be marks of legality and bondage than of free grace and gospel liberty? You may indeed find one here and there who is not inconsistent, in whom there is no very great blot, who does live a little like a Christian; but to find those who shine as stars in Christ's right hand, cities set on a hill, lights placed upon a candlestick to give light to all in the house, where in these degenerate days will you find them? Yet the power of Christ's grace is the same, his blood the same, his love the same, and he can work in us, as he wrought in days of old, to make us and manifest us a peculiar people, zealous of good works. O that he would do so! It is my desire that he may—that you and I may be a peculiar people, and not be content with a few lazy doings, but be zealous to adorn the doctrines we profess by that godly, holy, and consistent walk which is so desirable for our own peace as well as the glory

of God. By so doing, we shall meet the charge brought against us by our enemies in the most satisfactory way, by showing that grace does not lead to sin, but to holiness in heart, in lip, in life.