

## **THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN OVERCOME AND CAST DOWN**

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, August 15, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven. Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:10, 11

The prophetic portions of God's word admit, for the most part, of a twofold interpretation—one **literal** and historical, the other **spiritual** and experimental. It would seem, at first sight, that the former was the more easy to understand. But it is not so. Great difficulties usually beset the **literal** interpretation; and besides that it requires more research and study than most persons can give to the subject, the most intelligent commentators have been puzzled to make it so square in all points with history and chronology, as to furnish a distinct, coherent meaning. But of the **spiritual** and experimental interpretation every child of God in a measure, carries in his own bosom the key; and, therefore, the intricate wards of this lock, a very Chubb or Bramah to mere literal commentators, he can in many cases turn with comparative facility. Yet these two interpretations are very closely connected—the spiritual being based upon the literal; so that we must in some measure be able to understand the literal interpretation before we can fully enter into the spiritual. With God's blessing, therefore, I shall devote a few moments this morning to a brief literal explanation of the

verses preceding the text before I enter into the spiritual meaning of the words before us.

"There appeared," we read, "a great wonder in heaven." The heaven here spoken of is not heaven in its usual sense—that is, the glorious mansion of God—but the mystical heaven, what the Lord calls (Matt. 13) "the kingdom of heaven," that is, the dispensation of the gospel, the kingdom of grace and mercy set visibly up on the day of Pentecost. In this mystical heaven there appeared "a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." The woman thus gloriously arrayed represents the primitive and apostolic church as shining forth in the dispensation of the gospel, bright and beautiful. She stands clothed with Christ's righteousness, the dispensation which had passed away being under her feet, and crowned with the preaching of the gospel in its apostolic purity.

But she is represented as "**being with child**, and crying out as one travailing in birth." This signifies the soul travail of the primitive church for the manifestation of Christ to the world; that his grace and glory might be spread abroad; and he be brought forth as the Son of God to be believed in and adored by all nations—anticipating, as it were, in desire the millennial day. It has no reference to Christ's birth of the Virgin Mary, but to the bringing forth of Jesus in the glorious gospel, and to the full acknowledgment of his resurrection whereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power.

But there appeared another wonder in the mystical heaven—"**A great red dragon** having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads." This represents Rome pagan—or rather Satan using the pagan Roman empire as a means of opposing the propagation of the gospel. The seven heads and ten horns with the seven crowns, represent the

power of Rome Imperial. Nor were these persecutions without effect—"His tail drew away the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth," this being the effect of the persecution of Rome pagan in causing many who seemed to be stars in the heaven of the church, by persecution to prove apostates. But the dragon "stands before the woman which was about to be delivered, to devour the man child as soon as it is born." This represents the attempts of Rome Pagan to destroy the gospel by persecution, and to swallow up all profession and acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus. But "she brings forth the man child." All the efforts of Pagan Rome are ineffectual—Christ is brought forth and is made manifest by the preaching of the gospel in its apostolic purity.

But he does not come forth in all his glory. "The child is caught up unto God and to his throne;" to signify, not the resurrection of Christ, but the hiding of the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus in the bosom of God, and to shew that the full manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles is in the future. The woman flees to the wilderness. The church of God, instead of a triumphant, becomes a suffering church. Christ is hidden in the bosom of God from the world, and made known only to a suffering remnant. The church becomes a hidden church in the wilderness, where she is to be fed for a thousand two hundred and threescore days, or years, that is, maintained by the word and Spirit of God, during the 1,260 years other suffering condition.

Now comes "**war in heaven**;" not in the glorious abodes above. There can be no war there. There never has been, never could be battle and confusion in the realms of light, love, and bliss—as Milton represents; but in the mystical heaven in the spread and propagation of the gospel, there is and ever was strife between the powers of light and

darkness. "Michael and his angels" represent the power of God in spreading the truth, "and the dragon and his angels" represent the power of Satan, chiefly shewn in opposing the spread of the gospel and the downfall of paganism. They fight, but the dragon "prevailed not;" the gospel wins the day; Christ is stronger than Satan. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." This represents the triumph of the gospel over all the arts and malice of Satan, as displayed in the persecutions under the Pagan emperors.

Connected with this casting down of Satan from his pride of place, where he and his angels had been worshipped under the guise of Pagan deities, come the words of the text—"I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Pursuing the same train of prophetic events, the text, taken in its literal acceptation, is, therefore, a prophecy of the sufferings of the ancient martyrs under the Pagan persecutions, and of their victory over all the malice of Satan. This victory they gained, not by their own strength, but by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and the free yielding up of their lives which they loved not unto death—preferring death with all its torments to denying their Lord and Master. The blood of the martyrs thus became the seed of the church; and victory over paganism was obtained not by doing, but by suffering; not by living, but by

dying; not by fleshly works, but by faith in the blood of the Lamb, and faithfully adhering to the word of their testimony which had been made precious to their souls. This is, as far as I understand it, the **literal** interpretation of the chapter in connection with the text. Upon this, as I before hinted, is based the spiritual and experimental meaning to which we now come, and to which I shall chiefly confine myself.

Three features seem most prominent in the words before us.

I. **The casting down of the accuser of the brethren.**

II. **The means whereby the victory was gained over him.**

III. **The blessed consequences of the victory.**

I. Satan is here represented as the "**accuser of the brethren.**"

Satan does not "accuse" the world; he leaves it alone. Whilst a man is under his power and dominion, he will not molest or frighten him. Nay, so far from accusing such he will rather excuse them. He will palliate sin in every possible way before committed, to make it more readily indulged; and will excuse it after, to blunt the stings of remorse. But of "**the brethren,**" the people of God, Satan is the unwearied, inveterate, unrelenting accuser.

He is said, here, to "accuse them **before God day and night.**" This does not mean that Satan has access into the presence of God, to plead against his children before the Most High, as though he was ever standing at the right hand of God, in the realms of eternal bliss, and there and then accusing the bride of Jesus. Satan in heaven! That foul spirit

in the mansions of holiness! That fiend of darkness in the light which no man can approach unto! No. We cannot admit that, except in a mystical manner, as in the opening chapters of Job and in the vision of Micaiah. But the meaning is, that when the saints come before God, then and there he accuses them. This we find true in soul experience. Be engaged in your lawful calling, have no thought of God or godliness, Satan is quiet; he does not then accuse you. But be in the presence of God, come before him, as we read of David, that "he went and sat before the Lord," then Satan begins to accuse. There are six different sacred employments in which we may be said "to sit before the Lord;" secret prayer—worshipping in God's tabernacles—reading the Scriptures—communing with our own heart—conversing with the people of God—and partaking of the Lord's Supper. In each and all of these does Satan fulfil this malignant office of accusing the brethren.

1. But an accuser must have a spot whereon to stand, a court wherein he may lay his charges. This court is the **court of conscience**. **There** he brings his charges; there he files his pleas; there he exercises all his malicious eloquence and all his powers of argument to bring in the sentence "guilty of death." But without pleas an accuser is powerless. The eloquence of an advocate is nothing unless sustained by proofs. The accuser of the brethren is not wanting here. His pleas he arranges under two heads; and accuses the brethren sometimes as **law** sinners, and sometimes as **gospel** sinners. But it is worthy of observation that Satan's charges are not random accusations. They are always based upon truth. This gives them force and edge. It is true that "when he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it;" but there is this peculiarity in Satan's lies—that there is truth for their basis. Have you never observed this in worldly things? For a slander to obtain

currency there must be some truth in it. A complete, thorough falsehood has no legs to stand upon; to run abroad and to enter into house after house, it must have limbs of truth, though head and body be a lie. Base coin must be gilt and look like good, or none will take it. Trashy articles must have a surface put upon them, or nobody will purchase them. So Satan comes with a groundwork of truth. If he had no word of truth in his lips he could have no hold upon the conscience. Thus when the law seizes the sinner by the throat, and says, "Pay me that thou owest," Satan takes up its heavy charges, puts poignancy into them, and urges them with vehemence upon the conscience. Here is his main strength. When the Law pours out its curses, and the sentence of death connected with disobedience to it enters into the conscience, the soul under that sentence must fall down before it, must plead guilty. The charges are so true, and so backed by the authority of God, that there is no denying or getting away from them. Here then is the ground of truth on which Satan plants his foot. "You know," says he, "that you have broken the Law; that you have never loved the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and mind, and strength, nor your neighbour as yourself. Look at the breadth and spirituality, the claims and extent, the holiness and perfection of the Law, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart; and see the awful curse attached to every man who continueth not in all points to observe it in heart, lip, and life. But you have broken it again and again, in thought, word, and deed." All this is true, most true; and the accusation, therefore, cannot be denied nor evaded. But on this groundwork of truth comes Satan's lying conclusion—"For **you** there is no hope; despair must be your everlasting portion. A sinner like you never can be forgiven. The Law of God curses you; and under that curse you will surely lie to all eternity." When suffering under these accusations, the difficulty is to distinguish between the voice of God and the

voice of Satan; because the accuser of the brethren imitates the voice of God, and thus takes up and backs the sentence pronounced by the Lord's mouth. But herein is the enemy discovered that from true premises he draws false conclusions. Here Satan's cloven loot is detected. Because you have broken God's Law, and because it curses you, are you to be eternally lost? Satan says, yes; but God says, no. God applies the Law to bring you out of self-righteousness; Satan urges the Law to drive you to despair. God sends it into your conscience to bring, you to Christ; Satan sounds its threatenings to bring you to blaspheme; God condemns you by it to save you eventually into heaven; Satan condemns you by it to hurl your soul into hell.

2. But Satan can, and does accuse the brethren of sins against the **gospel**, as well as of sins against the law. When the Lord has spoken a measure of peace to the conscience, given the soul deliverance from law charges, and enabled it to receive the love of the truth, and to taste, in faith and feeling, something of the sweetness of the gospel, Satan is so far baffled. He slinks away. But he has not exhausted his quiver, nor parted with all his stock. Like an Old Bailey lawyer, he knows all the quirks and quilllets of the law; and his tongue sometimes smooth and oily, sometimes loud and thundering, whispering one while like a serpent, and roaring at another like a lion, can plead that white is black and black is white, to suit his purposes and confuse the soul. When, then, after a taste of the Lord's goodness and mercy, we depart from him, Satan brings his **gospel** charges. It is unhappily too true that after received mercy, when the Lord has in some measure withdrawn his gracious presence, the soul backslides from him, grows cold and lifeless, perhaps even slips into some inconsistency, and says or does something that makes sad work in the conscience. Through this breach Satan enters, and lays his accusations. "If you

were a child of God, you could not have acted so. No one who had tasted that the Lord was gracious ever departed from him as you have done. They are all kept; for 'He keepeth the feet of his saints.' You therefore cannot be one. You are a **gospel** sinner, whose doom is more dreadful than a **law** sinner. The hottest place in hell is for hypocrites like you."

Such and similar are Satan's accusations; and as I before hinted, so far based upon truth that the charges themselves cannot be denied. It is in the conclusions which Satan draws that the falsehood lies. There is the serpent hiss. Yield not then to Satan's conclusions. Admit the charge; for that is too clear to be denied; plead guilty;—**that** we must ever do; but do not yield to his conclusions, and cast away your hope. Because we have slipped, have backslidden, have neglected and forsaken the God of all our mercies, have in many things sadly erred, listened too often to the tempter, and walked too much after our idols, is there no hope? Surely this is not true. Therefore, I say, admit all Satan's accusations, but do not admit his conclusions. You have not rejected nor despised the gospel, counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, nor done despite to the Spirit of grace. You may be a backslider, but are not a gospel sinner.

Remember too that it is **before God** that Satan accuses the brethren. When acting inconsistently he does not accuse them; but when they return to the Lord with weeping and supplications, then he pleads against them all their filthiness and folly. See this in the case of Joshua the high priest. It was when he was standing before the angel of the Lord that Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. {Zec 3:1} He pointed, doubtless, to the smoke of the fire of temptation which had blackened the brand, and to the filthy garments in which he stood clothed. There was truth in the charge. He

**was** a blackened brand; but the Lord had snatched him half burnt through from the fire; he **was** clothed with filthy ragments; but the command was, "Take away the filthy garments from him," Thus was Satan baffled, confounded, and put to flight.

II. But we find that the blessed saints and martyrs of old were enabled to overcome this accuser of the brethren. The accuser of the brethren was cast down. His feet slipped and fell.

**"He fled, and with him fled the shades of night."** The brethren gained the victory. But how? **"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."**

The weapons which the Holy Ghost put into their hands, and gave them strength to wield, were three

1. **The Blood of the Lamb**
2. **The Word of their Testimony**—and
3. **The Spirit of Martyrdom.**

The saints and martyrs did not overcome Satan by denying his charges: that they could not do, for their consciences compelled them to admit their truth. This gave Satan such firm ground; for who can stand against the verdict of his own conscience? Nor did they overcome him by pleading their weakness against sin, and their inability to resist temptation. Nor did they vanquish him by alleging the force of example in others; nor by palliating their guilt as comparatively small; nor by promising reformation present or future; nor by

quoting God's decrees as necessarily influencing their conduct. They well knew that Leviathan would count such darts as stubble, and would laugh at the shaking of such a spear. All such iron he would esteem as straw, and all such brass as rotten wood. They dropped, therefore, all such carnal, useless weapons, and betook themselves to those alone which they knew would obtain for them the victory.

i. The first was, "**The blood of the Lamb.**" How was this weapon effectual? Because the blood of the Lamb proclaims pardon and peace; and therefore sweeps away Satan's conclusion, that the accused being guilty, condemnation must necessarily follow.

The expression, "They overcame him **by** the blood of the Lamb," implies that it was a weapon in their hands, firmly wielded in their grasp. When David overcame the champion of the Philistines by a sling and a stone, the sling was not hanging up in the sheepcote, nor was the pebble lying in the bed of the brook. It was not the blood of the Paschal lamb in the basin, but sprinkled on the lintel and side posts, which preserved Israel in Egypt from the destroying angel. Thus it is not the blood of the Lamb as revealed in the word of God, but as applied to, and sprinkled on the conscience which answers the accusations of Satan. But we may observe that there is our coming unto the blood of sprinkling, and there is the blood of sprinkling coming unto us. The apostle speaks (Heb. 12:22, 24), "Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." This coming to the blood is the first step in gaining the victory.

In Christian warfare, defeat generally, if not always, precedes conquest. It is not therefore so easy to overcome sin, death, and hell, which are all striving against us; and usually we never look to the right quarter for help until well nigh all

hope is gone. The first gleam generally comes from a view of the blood of the Lamb, if I may use the expression, in the distance. The lighthouse casts its glimmering rays far over the wide waste of waters to guide into harbour the storm-tossed mariner. So when there is a view in the soul of the blood of the Lamb even at a distance, it is a beacon light which draws towards it the eyes and heart of those who are doing business in deep waters. The light that shines may not at first be very bright or clear; but it is a day star heralding the rising of the sun. The blessed Spirit shines upon the word, and raises up faith in the soul to believe that the Lamb has been slain, that blood has been shed, that a sacrifice has been offered, and that a new and living way has been opened and consecrated, through the veil—the rent flesh of the Lord Jesus. This affords the accused soul some foothold, on which it can stand, and return an answer to Satan's accusations. "True," it says, "I am a guilty wretch. I am a sinner, and the chief of sinners; for I have sinned against light, against convictions, against conscience, and the fear of God. My heart is altogether evil, my mind wholly corrupt, and my nature utterly depraved. I have never done any one good thing. I am a wretch, and the worst of wretches; and I can never say anything too bad of myself nor others of me. But with all that, the Lamb of God hath shed his precious blood, and that blood—cleanseth from all sin." "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord," we read, "shall lift up a standard against him." The standard which he lifts up is the blood-stained flag of the crucified Redeemer. To come for refuge and shelter under this banner dipped in blood, is to make head against Satan's accusations.

Still the victory is not fully gained. It is only when there is a coming of the blood into the heart, a sprinkling of it on the conscience, a manifestation and application of it to the soul that Satan is effectually put to flight. "They conquered him

by the blood of the Lamb;" but he was not effectually put to the rout till he saw the blood on the conscience, as the angel of death saw in Egypt the blood on the lintel.

ii. But they had another weapon—"The word of their testimony."

This, I believe, is the word that God had put into their heart. It is, therefore, called "the word of **their** testimony," because truly and emphatically theirs. It is not called the word of **the** testimony, nor the word of **God's** testimony, but "the word of **their** testimony." The sword in the Tower is not the soldier's, but the sovereign's. When put into the warrior's hand, it is for the first time **his**. The martyr's sword was not a text, but a testimony; not a quotation nor a parallel passage, but a word from God's mouth. As thus made theirs, they could use this word as a testimony against Satan. Thus every sweet promise which comes with power to the soul; every encouraging word; every token for good; every beam of hope, or ray of mercy which shoots athwart the black clouds of despondency into the heart, is an answer to Satan's accusations. This is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" not a sword sheathed, but a sword bare and naked, ready for use. The word which God is pleased to speak to your soul is the grand weapon which you must never give up. Satan will accuse you of every sin; and when he has got you down, he would soon make an end of you if God did not interfere and succour you. He knows where to hit us. We have most of us weak points, where a slight blow tells, much more a heavy one. A besetting sin, or a prevailing infirmity, or a former inconsistency, or an experience defective in some particular, or an unbelieving frame, are in grace what a weak limb or asthmatic lungs are in nature. Satan directs his artillery where the fortress is most assailable. Do you never hear the hissing of his red-hot shot?

"Can the fear of God be in your soul when you are so much like the world? Why did you ever make a profession? Would it not have been better for you to have been altogether in the world than to act as you have acted? Look at your daily walk and conversation; what a poor, barren, stupid wretch you are! You are now almost asleep, sitting there without life or feeling. It is true when you get into trials you begin to rouse up and call upon God; but this is no mark of grace, for the ungodly we read, call upon God when distress and anguish come upon them." How then are these cruel charges to be met? Thus; "It is true; I admit it all; and I am worse than you can make or paint me. But has not God spoken this and that word to my soul? Did he not give me this or that promise? Have I not had this and that manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ? Did I not hear with power on that memorable day, when my heart was so broken and melted? Did not tears of mingled joy and sorrow gush forth from my eyes, and gladness, blended with contrition, fill my heart?"

When the word of God is thus believed, laid hold of, and firmly abided by at all risks and hazards, it brings victory. Thus the martyrs lived and died. They threw away all weapons but the word of God, the power of which they had felt in their conscience. This they handled and wielded, as the life-guardsmen handle and wield their own sword. He is not at home with any other. The handle from use fits his hand as if the two grew together. So must the promises and truth of God be felt to be your own, if you are to use them effectually against your adversary. You cannot fight Satan with any other weapon; for you cannot hold it firmly enough. A twist of his blade will knock out of your hand texts picked up at random. What is taken up in presumption is usually laid down in despair.

But suppose the Lord has not done very much for your soul, nor given you great manifestations or promises. Still, if he has ever spoken one word to your heart, it is a testimony, and this you must use as you best can. Oh! How helpless is the soul without it! when there is not a single testimony of the fear or love of God being in the heart! It is like a life-guardsmen at Waterloo, with a broken arm, ready to be cut down by a French cuirassier. Unless the blood of the Lamb be sprinkled upon the warrior's breast, and the sword of his testimony be in the warrior's hand, he stands naked before his enemy, as the children of Israel in the days of Saul, when neither sword nor spear was found in the hand of any of the people that followed him.

iii. But they had another weapon still, the mention of which is a special allusion to the ancient martyrs—"**They loved not their lives unto the death!**" This weapon we may call therefore **the spirit of martyrdom**. Now, in what does that spirit consist? In total **self-renunciation**. How did the martyrs die in Smithfield? We read in Fox's Book of Martyrs that many men, women, and even children died in those burning flames in triumph. But did they come to those flames in their own strength or righteousness? No! They went all weakness and helplessness; but relying upon the power of God, they renounced all earthly things for his name's sake, even life itself: "They loved not their lives unto the death." They parted with name, fame, worldly goods, life itself, and counted it as nothing in comparison with the truth of God and the profession of his glorious gospel. Such times may come again; and if so, there will doubtless be similar witnesses—in themselves all weakness, but in Christ all strength.

But the Roman amphitheatre in Pagan, and Smithfield in Popish persecutions, are not the only spots and places where the spirit of martyrdom has been displayed. There is another

arena—the Christian's heart. We must carry in our bosom the spirit of martyrdom, just as much as though we were called upon to die at the stake. The Lord Jesus said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that **loseth his life** for my sake shall find it;" {Mt 10:39} and again, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and **his own life also**, he cannot be my disciple."

This is the essence of martyrdom—to love not our lives unto the death. Suffering does not make a martyr; for error has had its victims as well as truth its witnesses. In this country, Papists and Socinians, in China Jesuits, in Spain Jews, have been burnt to ashes sooner than renounce their creed. It is suffering for **truth, for Jesus' sake**, which makes the martyr. Many have a dogged obstinacy, so that they would sooner die than yield, even where they are clearly wrong. These are not martyrs but madmen. Obstinacy in error only adds one sin to another. We must have the martyr's spirit, though we may never die the martyr's death; and that spirit is **self-renunciation**. Life is the dearest of all possessions. If that be renounced, the rest is easy.

The renunciation of life implies the renunciation of self; and this includes the renunciation of all creature strength, wisdom, and righteousness. Look at the Smithfield martyrs. What creature strength had they in the flame? what natural wisdom to answer their accusers? what fleshly righteousness to stand in before God? All that was of self and earth was renounced in renouncing life. This baffled Satan. He thought the flames would make them recant; and took advantage of threatened death to urge more vehemently his accusations. What was their answer? That of the three children who were cast by Nebuchadnezzar into the burning fiery furnace. "I cannot give up the truth. I cannot deny the Lord. Come

heaven, come hell, I will not belie my conscience." This was Satan's last assault. When he could not carry the city by storm, he raised the siege. Have the martyr's spirit, and you will win the martyr's victory.

III. This brings us to its **blessed consequences**. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, **now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.**" The loud voice denotes that there were witnesses of this solemn conflict. "We are made a spectacle," says the apostle, "unto the world, and to angels, and to men." We are not fighting the battle without witnesses. As the apostle speaks in another place; "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." A cloud of heavenly spectators surrounds the battle field, watching with intense interest the struggle; and when Satan flees, they lift up the victorious shout—"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." These heavenly blessings had not "come" before—that is, in clear, bright, undeniable manifestation. They were in the mind of God, in his eternal purpose; but they had not come into visible being, into inward and personal experience, into soul realization and blessed enjoyment. It is in vain for the children of God to expect a victory without a battle. Some people talk as if heaven was to be obtained without a struggle; as if sin, Satan, the Law, and conscience fled at the first charge, before a sword was flushed or blood drawn. If shame could be known in heaven, a blush might well spread over the face of such bloodless combatants in the presence of the suffering Limb of God, and before the martyrs and palm-bearing victors, who came out of "great tribulation." One would think that even on earth they must be mute during the singing of

the heavenly anthem, "Now is come salvation," &c., when they have known neither battle nor victory.

But why "NOW?" Because till Satan was cast down and overcome, these heavenly blessings were not come into the heart.

1. "**Salvation,**" **What salvation?** Salvation by grace, full and free; salvation without any intermixture of creature righteousness; salvation gushing from the bosom of God; salvation flowing wholly and solely through the blood of the Lamb. But salvation never can be tasted unless there has been a previous foretaste of condemnation. Heaven can never be looked up into before there has been a looking down into the wicket gate of hell. There must have been an experience of guilt before there can be the enjoyment of pardon. "Now is come salvation." **From what?** From the accusations of Satan, the curses of the law, the fear of death, the terrors of hell, and sentence of damnation. And how does salvation come? Whilst the battle is going on; whilst the issue is doubtful; whilst hand to hand, foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder, Satan and the soul are engaged in deadly strife, there is no felt experience of salvation. There may be hope; and this enables the soldier to stand his ground; but there is no shout of victory till the enemy is put to flight. But when Satan is defeated, his accusations silenced, and the soul liberated, then is "come salvation." The sweetest song that ever heaven proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is "salvation." To be saved! saved from death and hell; saved from the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched; saved from the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit; saved from the companionship of tormenting fiends and of all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned; saved from blaspheming God in unutterable woe; saved from an eternity of misery without

end or hope! And saved into heaven! into the sight of Jesus as he is; into perfect holiness and happiness; into the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints; and all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity! What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word "**salvation**?"

2. "**And strength.**" There was no strength before, at least no felt, realized, enjoyed strength. Sin was too strong, Satan too powerful, his accusations too weighty, and the conscience too guilty for the struggling soul to realize strength. When the soldier in battle is bathed in sweat and blood, scarcely able from weariness to move hand or foot, and his sword is only kept in his hand by the blood and gore which glue them together, he fights in weakness, unconscious of strength. So the soul, when fighting with sin and Satan, fights on when ready to drop. It is all weakness then. But with salvation comes "strength,"—strength to believe, strength to hope, and strength to love, strength to bless and praise the Lord, and shout victory over the flying foe. Then there is strength to credit the promise and perform the precept; to walk in the ways of God and submit to the will of God; and to run the way of his commandments with an enlarged heart.

3. "**And the kingdom of our God.**" This too was little known before. The kingdom of God is an inward kingdom, and it is set up in the heart of a people made willing in the day of his power. It consists, therefore, in the dethroning of sin, Satan, and self, and in the setting up of Jesus as sovereign of the heart and Lord of the affections. Till Satan is cast out and the conscience cleansed from his accusations, Jesus cannot sit upon his inward throne. But with salvation to deliver, and strength to believe, comes the kingdom of God; and Christ is crowned upon the battle field—elevated like the kings of old upon the shields of the conquerors.

4. And with this comes "**the power of Christ.**" This all-mighty, all-victorious power was not fully known before. How earnestly did the apostle desire "to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection;" how little is known of "the power of his Christ," what Christ has done, what Christ can do! But when salvation comes, and strength, and the kingdom of God, then too is known "the power of his Christ," his crucified Christ, his risen Christ, his glorified Christ, his interceding Christ; of Christ at the right hand of God, "King of kings and Lord of lords;" ruling, guiding, directing, upholding all things in heaven and earth. This power Christ often withholds for a time that the soul may learn its weakness. When pressed hard with Satan's accusations, little comparatively is known what Christ can do for the soul; how he can repel Satan, answer every charge, fight its battles, and support the fainting spirit. Till the enemy is fled, and the field of battle gone over, his power is not often fully known. The number of the slain reveals the fury of the foe. But this too makes known the power of the Conqueror. "Who is this," asks the Church, "that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" "I," answers the Lord, "that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

"Salvation, strength, the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ!" These are great things, blessed things. In them lies the very marrow of vital godliness—the very essence of that religion which God the Spirit sets up in the heart. But do you not observe their close and intimate connexion with martyrdom and suffering? Do not separate them. Do not think that the whole of religion consists in reading, hearing, praying, and attending to the ordinances of the gospel. All this is well; but salvation, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ are not tied to outward observances.

O how mysterious is true religion! How supernatural! how opposed to all preconceived ideas, or conclusions of the natural mind! Should we not, left to ourselves, say, "this is religion, to read God's word with undeviating regularity, to be very earnest in prayer, to watch and strive against all our besetting sins, never in the least degree to slip in thought, word, or deed, to do the best in our power in all the relationships of life, and so go smoothly to heaven." Let me not breathe a word against such things. They are good as means, but dangerous as ends. They are not to be left undone; but there is something far beyond them all. But is this smooth, easy road to heaven God's way? Is it the path in which the redeemed have ever walked? Those that know anything of the kingdom of God have not found it so plain, easy, and beaten a road. It certainly is not so mapped out in the words before us. The blessed martyrs did not gain their victory upon such easy terms. Theirs was not this smooth path, nor did they walk in this flowery meadow. We read that they had an accuser who accused them before God day and night. Is Satan in our day less active? Is the heart of man better now than it was then? Has God devised of late years some new road to heaven other than that in which these blessed saints walked in their day and generation? The Bible would not be true; the experience of God's people would be false; the tears that they shed; the sighs they heave; the cries, prayers, and groans that they pour forth for deliverance, would be all so many fancies, whims of a heated brain, not deep soul realities. If heaven were gained at so easy a price, so facile a rate, heaven's courts would be filled with a motley throng who had not learnt the song of Moses and the Lamb. Half round the throne would be sufferers, and half would be doers; martyrs singing praise to the Redeemer, and workers chanting anthems to self. But have we any choice in this matter? May I be a martyr, or a worker at discretion, selecting, **ad libitum**, my own path. To come into

it, or to walk in it, is not of our own choice. It is all according to God's own eternal purpose. He has appointed a certain path in which his children are to walk; he takes their feet with his own hands, and puts them into the path; and if they are diverging from it he puts them into it back again. It is "through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom;" and he has never yet recalled that word.

There may be those here who are suffering under the accusations of Satan so as sometimes to be almost without hope. All their religion seems gone, and they have no firm ground to stand upon. They feel to have so sinned against God, that it seems impossible for him to forgive them. Now you may depend upon it, that you are not travelling alone in this road, but have more fellow-travellers than you are perhaps aware of. Then be not dismayed if you find Satan or your own conscience—and you cannot always distinguish between them accusing you before God day and night. Cast not away your hope if in secret prayer you feel a load of guilt upon your conscience. Be not dismayed if, when you come before God, thousands of charges are brought against you, and it seems almost presumptuous in you to open your lips before him. See how these blessed martyrs were accused, and yet they came off victorious? Their weapons must be yours—"The blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the loving not of their lives unto the death." Search and examine well your experience. Have you never had some view of the blood of the Lamb? Has it never been sprinkled on your conscience? Have you not had some views of it by faith so as to come unto it and hide your guilty soul under it? Have you never come to "the blood of sprinkling" by faith? This was the first turn of the fight. And has the Lord never spoken a word to your soul? Have you never had a testimony in your conscience, been melted in prayer, softened and blessed? Have you never had a sweet promise dropped into

your heart? Did not this give, whilst it lasted, a measure of relief to your conscience, and in some degree answer the cruel accusations of Satan? And have you not renounced all your own righteousness, and felt willing to die if you were sure of your interest in Christ? These were the weapons whereby the martyrs conquered. We read nothing here of their own righteousness, or consistency, or piety, or holiness, or resolutions, or good words and works. Nothing is said to the high praise and glory of self. The only three weapons here mentioned are the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the spirit of martyrdom. And these three weapons are found more or less in the armoury of every child of God.

But see if you cannot also trace victory as well as conflict. With the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the spirit of martyrdom came salvation and strength, the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ. Have you not experienced a measure of these blessings? The blood of the Lamb brings "**salvation.**" Have you not embraced salvation by grace as dear to your soul? With salvation comes "**strength.**" "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." **Ps 138:3** Have you not felt this? And "**the kingdom of our God.**" Have you never touched the sceptre and bowed down at Jesus' feet as Lord of all? Been made willing to part with all idols that he might reign supreme in your heart and affections? And "**the power of his Christ.**" Are you willing that Jesus should take the reins of government, should manage you and yours, should subdue your sins, fight your battles, and bring you off more than conqueror? All these blessings are connected with, and flow from the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and the spirit of self-renunciation. Look not then to any other quarter for help or hope; but trust wholly and solely to the Lord, who can bring

you through every trial and difficulty, and give you to live in his glorious presence for ever.