

The Faith and Spiritual Baptism of God's Children

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, February 23, 1859

"For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3:26, 27

I wish I could say so. Looking around upon this congregation this morning, would to God I could say with any regard to truth and consistency, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But can I say so, taking the utmost stretch of what is called charity, taking the most favourable view of the case, could I dare to say of you all, "Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"? Would not the lives of many of you give a point-blank contradiction to such a statement? Nor of a congregation like mine, so large, comparatively speaking, could we even entertain a hope that many were the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. But I am glad to see you here, so many of you, this morning, under the sound of truth. No one knows what God may still have in reserve for your souls. You young people, you who make no profession, I know not, you know not, what God may have in reserve for you in his secret purposes; therefore, I am glad that so many of you should come under the sound of the truth. It may be that God will give that truth an edge and entrance into your heart. But it is impossible for any man who fears God, and has a conscience made tender, so to mix good and evil, so to confound the wheat and the tares, as to say that all his congregation are the children of God. But, is it your desire, the breathing of your soul, the earnest longing wish of your heart to have a testimony that shall stand by you in the hour and day of sickness and death that you are one of those favoured ones—the children of God by faith in

Christ Jesus? The Lord enable me this morning to touch upon the real case, and so to describe what his grace does in the heart of a sinner that you may have some sweet evidence for yourselves—you that fear God—that you are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

In opening up the words of our text I shall

First, as the Lord may enable me, show,—How we become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, What is the result of this, a being baptized with Christ.

Thirdly, What follows upon that, the putting on of Christ.

Now we are not to suppose that we become for the first time children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The apostle does not say so,—he does not say "ye were," but "ye are," the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. There is a difference between the two expressions. The child of God, viewed with the spiritual eye, never was anything else but a child of God. How we read by the pen of Paul, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." (Heb. 2:14.) Here they are spoken of as the children for whom Christ took flesh and blood. Therefore, they were children before any of them were called by grace, and how many of these children are yet unborn, lying in the womb of time, to be brought forth into actual being, and others of these children dead in trespasses and sins to be brought forth and manifested as the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me!" (Isa. 8:18.) They were given him to be the children of God in eternity, before all worlds, and united to him as the members

of his mystical body, hence ye *are* saints; not to make you such. Here is the blessedness, that so far as we are the children of God we are so from all eternity by virtue of a union with Christ, our living head. But so far as a sensible realization of it is concerned, any bringing forth in a manifested way, the truth to our hearts in time, to this the Apostle refers in our text, "Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." For these children, to whom he thus speaks in these comforting strains, might have had doubts and fears as to the reality of the case. They might have looked up to their heavenly Father, and beheld his glory and majesty, his holiness and righteousness, and then, looking upon themselves, they might have seen how far they were off that righteousness: and thus they might have experienced a doubt as to whether they were the children of God or no. They might have been comparing themselves with him, and have said,— "If he is my Father and Friend, surely I shall bear some resemblance to him." They could not enjoy that heavenly relationship. The Holy Ghost had not tuned their hearts to sing the note of praise, nor dropped the spirit of adoption into their soul, whereby they could cry "Abba, Father." The words might fall on their tongue, but they were unable to look up, drop into his hands, and lay at his feet and cry "Abba, Father." So he encourages them, though they could not get beyond their doubts and fears, nor could they extricate themselves from the bondage of sin: yet if they believed in Christ Jesus, if they had a living faith in him, that was the ground of their being manifested the children of God, and they were to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, for in him they were the children of God.

With God's blessing we shall go a little deeper into the subject, and see what it is to be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. No one can realize at first what God is doing in his soul by his word and grace. When the Lord is at work by

the law convincing the sinner of his sins, bringing him to the bar, arresting him before his awful tribunal, how can he believe that God is his Father and Friend? and how can he believe that this is a work of grace upon his heart? He cannot see it in the beginning of the work, he feels sin too keenly and the law too heavily to be enabled to believe it is a work of grace. I have no faith in a man, who, at the time he is under conviction, can cry out he is a child of God. His sins, the law, Satan, the accusations of a guilty conscience, the distresses of his mind, the darkness of his soul,—all these stand as so many witnesses against him; nor is it till after a many bitter struggle, and many a hearty groan, and many a seeking the Lord's face—night and day,—that the Lord sweetly resolves the doubt, and brings peace into the conscience, and makes it known that he is a child of God. For the most part he is going the wrong way to work; he tries to establish his own righteousness, he wants to become truly religious: to break off old sins, to bring that which God abhors to recommend himself to the favour of God by walking in the right ways; but the Lord resists him. He is a consuming fire, not to be approached in this way. To approach God with creature obedience is to draw down the frown of his solemn displeasure. It is right, because the Lord is showing him the evil of sin; but it is the wrong way to get peace. It is the right way, because he should be humble, because he should be convinced of his being an outcast, and of the bitterness of sin; but it is wrong to come before God with his own righteousness and work, and thereby seek to recommend himself to the favour of God. For instance, here is a hovel, and it is intended to build upon its site a mansion. Well, it is right to remove the old building, to take away the old stones, to dig out the soil, to lay the foundation, but that is not the building. If, when all were removed, the builder were to say, "Here is the building," we should say, "He is wrong." It is right to take away the old stones, and put new

ones in their place; to remove the old timbers, and to put new wood in their room; to make a good foundation for the building to stand upon; but that is not the building. So in a spiritual sense it is right to know grief and distress of mind, to give up your own righteousness, to be condemned by the law, to experience the bitterness of sin; but wrong if thereby you are seeking to set up salvation. Therefore it is right in one way, but it is wrong in another. So the child of God, though he may be doing that which is perfectly right in one sense, yet in another he may be doing that which is perfectly wrong. It is right to be wounded, yet it is right to be healed. It is right to know the bitterness of sin, but it is right also to know the sweetness of pardon. It is right to tremble, but it is right to be bold. It is right to mourn over sin, but it is right also to rejoice at different times, as the Lord may be pleased to enable you; you who are so distressed in your mind, suffering under the lashes of your conscience, it is all right; but it is wrong for you to hang upon these things, and think of establishing thereby a plea before God. The Apostle did not say we are all the children of God by obedience to the law, by being distressed on account of our transgressions, but "by faith in Christ Jesus." But what man really believes in Christ Jesus by living faith, unless convinced of unbelief? Oh! the lessons we are to learn inwardly, feelingly, and experimentally! What a deal of false faith has to be cleared out of our heart! How this false faith of ours, these vain expectations, these empty professions, this rubbish has all to be swept out and carried away to the Valley of Hinnom, and there left to rot and perish. Therefore, no man has a living faith in the Lord—the Lamb—who is not convinced of unbelief. That is the work of the Lord—the Lamb. Some of you may be under that work now: you would believe, but cannot; you try to believe, but find you are powerless; you see precious things in the word, but what are they to you except you can grasp them? You are learning your unbelief,

your lifelessness, and your sin and misery.

Now, the Lord, when he has taught you these lessons, will go on to teach you others. We are always learning. You may be in the lowest form, crying over your lessons, a very stupid child, scarcely knowing A from B, now and then for some neglect kept from home, and then you begin to cry and mourn and groan. But the Lord is teaching you all the while. Children naturally don't always prove the most ignorant men because when children they were stupid. Stupid children often turn out very bright geniuses. So in grace, it is not those who take up the truth most quickly that turn out the best Christians. There is line upon line, and precept upon precept. Those who make the greatest progress at the first often lose the truth altogether, and go back to their old ways. Therefore, don't write bitter things against yourself because you are very slow; it may not be the worse for you if you have to cry and shed many a tear over your hornbook, and can scarcely see a letter in the alphabet. In due time all things will be made clear to your mind. "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

But by and by the Lord will begin to show you what faith in Christ Jesus is, and make it manifest that you are one of his dear children. Well, as the soul is brought down to see the fall more, and the dreadful malady of sin, and its lifeless state, so that it is ready to give up all; then the Lord makes Christ known to the soul. I don't mean to say that Christ comes into the heart of every man as Huntington experienced him. That is so evidently. We are not all so favoured as this eminent man was. But all that experience themselves to be the children of God do so by faith in Christ Jesus, and the first glimpse of hope in the soul, the first manifestation of mercy, may be but a single ray. As we see sometimes in nature, when clouds cover the sky, there is a

beam that shines through the clouds; the sun may be hidden from view, but there is a beam that shines through an opening in the clouds. So in grace, only a beam of light, only a ray of hope, may gleam through your dark mind; something, it may be, that shows you where the sun is. In nature, when you see the beam, you discover in a moment where the sun is, and you can direct your eyes to that quarter of the sky, and the reason you know where the sun is, is because you are looking where the gleam comes from. So with the soul. You may be reading the word, with your mind full of darkness and bondage, writing the most bitter things against your soul, cutting yourself off from eternal life, fancying yourself the worst hypocrite that walked God's earth, trembling to go into a place of worship, fearing to sit opposite or by the side of a child of God lest you should be the means of preventing good from coming into his soul; you may have all these fears and apprehensions, and think your case so desperate that you can scarcely believe there is any salvation for you. Well, amidst all this dejection of soul,—ah, that it might come into your hearts this morning,—a blessed ray of light comes that sheds its lustre across the dark cloud; the faith of Jesus, his adoring blood, his justifying obedience, his dying love, may burst into your soul—a sweet hope then springs up. You begin to see his suitability to your case; that he is just the Saviour your soul needs—could you get him you want no other—if you had but him you would have all. You feel there is an empty void in your soul which he can fill. You feel that miserable shrinking under a sense of your nakedness, that nothing but his justifying robe can cover. Well, then, that is not to be despised; for to despise that would be casting contempt upon a lost child of God. When the little babe comes into the world is he despised? Does not the mother hug him to her warm bosom? Do not all the family hail the new-comer? Do they take him and throw him over the fence, and say "What has he come to mar the

inheritance for? No; they hail the new-comer, and imprint a kiss on the face of the babe. Well, then, so it is in grace. Here is a child of God, just spiritually born—just come into a spiritual existence. Are we to despise him because he is unable to see things as others see them? Who is the Babylonian who will take this child and dash it against the stones? Who is to cut off this child's head, and like Herod, to slay all the children under a certain age? Surely, no one. The child is rather to be caressed, and kept warm, and nurtured till he has grown into a man. So, who is to despise a child of grace—who is to cast a babe out of the family, and say he has no right to share in the inheritance? Surely none with the heart of a child. He may be very wicked; he may be very deeply sunk in the Adam fall—but you must not cast him out if he has any faith in Christ Jesus. Have you faith in Christ Jesus? It is a great word to say, but search and see; look into the very bottom of your heart and see whether you can find faith in Christ Jesus. You may find doubt and unbelief there. There is no salvation in that. You may find gloom, despondency, and wretchedness. Hang not the salvation of your soul upon that. Can you find faith? Oh! for faith! Can you find faith in Christ Jesus there? What are you looking for? You have lost something; you want to find it. What are you looking for? Are you clear in your own mind as to what you are looking for? Here is a thing lost in a shop or on a farm; something lost; it must be found. Such a thing is lost. All set about looking for it. One says to another, "Do you know what it is that is lost. Could you recognise it? Should you know it if it was brought to light?" Well, then, what is to be found in a spiritual sense? Faith in the heart. Do you know what it is in the feeling experience of it? Has God the Spirit ever blessed you with a single grain or particle of faith in Christ Jesus? *Do you believe that you ever did believe?* There is weight in the remark; I repeat it. *Do you believe that you ever did believe?* You may not believe now. It may be your

mind is dark—faith is not in exercise. But can you believe that there was a time when you did believe? for upon faith hangs everything. Upon faith hang the promises, for by faith it is that we are enabled to believe them. Have you felt its power in your soul and believed? Have you seen Jesus by faith? Have you enjoyed a sweet discovery of his beauty and blessedness, and had a testimony in this, the Spirit bearing witness that then and there you believed in Christ Jesus. Now, if you have got this in your heart you have got something in your heart in which you can trust. Does not the wife know whether she has the wedding ring on or not? Suppose she were to lose the wedding ring—the ring of union between a man and his wife—would she not look for it till she had found it? Well, so with the soul. Have you the wedding ring on your soul? Can you say which was the day when you were married to the Lord? When did he put the ring of eternal love upon your soul, and espouse you to himself? But you have lost the wedding ring. Search then till you find it. See whether you can realize the time, day, hour, or moment when you were married to Jesus—to be his for life and death, time and eternity, weal or woe. Ah! to be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus! and what a mercy it is that it is by faith in Christ Jesus! That is all that is required. Faith in Christ Jesus. You say, "What a sinner I am." You are, and you never will be anything else. But you say, "Oh! my heart is so wicked!" Yes, it is wicked, and ten thousand times more wicked than you know anything at all about. So am I. So are all. It was no slight fall in Adam. It injured every member, and scarred every bone in the skin. What a height it was to fall from! Then you are a sinner, face it, look at it, examine it. Do not be afraid of it. It is a fact, whether you believe it or not, that you are a sinner, and that before a holy God. Face the matter. Here is a man—or here are persons, those that would not look you in the face—they persuade themselves they are not so bad as we think, they try to outface light and

conscience; they try to make themselves good people; they are very religious; they are sure they are not sinners. Then I am sure they are not saints. They must become sinners, feelingly such, before they can become saints. The truth is they are trying to outface conscience; they are denying what God is working in the heart. This is not looking the matter in the face. Suppose you have put into your hands a long bill. You look at the bill; you have not the money to pay it. It would not alter the bill to say, "I think it is not correct; I thought it was not ten pounds; I thought it was so and so." That would not alter the bill. The bill says it is ten, and you must pay it, because you have had the articles. It would not alter the figures to make the ten into a five. It is really ten. You may talk as you please, think as you please, but after all your fancying and quibbling, there it stands; and you must then face the figure, look it in the face, and beg of the Lord to pay it for you. Instead of outfacing your conscience, and putting first one figure down, and then another, face it out, and add it up and see whether the blood of Jesus Christ can pay it all. This is the way the child of God acts, as distinct from the hypocrite and Pharisee and self-deceived professor. He accepts the bill. Here is the publican and Pharisee:—The Pharisee counts up the bill. He says, "I am not this or that," striking out figure after figure. Here is the ten thousand pound debtor:—The pen goes straight across the last nought. He doesn't owe a thousand pounds; no, nor a hundred; no, nor ten; no, nor one. He says, "I am free," and there he brings condemnation upon himself. His self-righteousness excusing him does not make the bill one figure less. The publican confesses the bill. He begs God to have mercy on him. The whole sum is paid, the burden is taken off his mind, and pardon sealed upon his conscience, and he goes down to his house justified. Then accept the arrangement, and if the Lord has given you a grain of faith in Christ Jesus, bless him for the mercy, and be ever, as he enables, looking to this

most blessed Jesus. If the law brings his heavy charges, take them to Christ, and enjoy the sweetness of his mercy. Oh! the privilege and sweet blessing of being a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Depend upon it, faith in Christ Jesus is the door to let in every other grace; for without faith, no prayer; without faith, no love; without faith, no hope; without faith, no praise; without faith, no spirituality; without faith, no sanctification; without faith, no holiness; without faith, no freedom or liberty. But with faith in Christ Jesus there is holy liberty, sweet freedom, praising his sacred majesty, and every other grace of the Spirit, because through that open door in the soul every grace of the Spirit comes in; so that to be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, oh! what a blessing is couched here!

But I pass on to our second part, which is, the being baptized in Christ.

Now you all know that I hold the ordinance of *Baptism* as an ordinance adapted to the Church of God for a type and figure of a higher baptism—the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this case I believe the apostle is speaking of spiritual baptism; for many were not baptized with water, and yet were baptized with the Holy Ghost, as the thief upon the cross; and many are baptized with water who know nothing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. So I take the baptism here spoken of as referring to the spiritual baptism, wherewith we become immersed into the fulness of the Son of God. But taking the ordinance as illustrating the expression we shall throw a light upon it; for by it we shall see how the spiritual baptism is borne out by the latter representation, and more clearly how it gives us a vital union with the Lord the Lamb. Water is a literal figure, representing the spirit of Christ, which penetrates through the clothes we wear to the very pores of our skins, and thus baptism gives us an union with the water.

So of spiritual baptism; there is by it an entrance of the Spirit into a man's soul, and thus he is brought into a living union with the Lord the Lamb; thus he becomes immersed into the spirit, the grace and love of Christ. As we read of the children of Israel,—they were baptized in the clouds, that is, the cloud surrounded them. Every drop of that cloud fell upon their bodies and penetrated through their clothes to their skin. So the saint of God is baptized with a sense of Christ's presence and grace, and fulness of Christ's spirit, and this gives him an union with the Lord Jesus Christ, as the cloud was the connecting link between their bodies and him in the cloud. So the Spirit of God envelopes, surrounds, embraces the child of God, and now gives him a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is above the cloud in eternal bliss. The cloud descends from heaven to envelope the soul, and the soul of the child of God immersed in the cloud in the grace and glory of Christ—is baptized with the love and spirit of the Lord the Lamb, and so it is raised up into sweet communion with the Lord of life and glory. The Lord Jesus Christ himself went up in the cloud—the cloud of glory. The cloud of glory was also over the tabernacle in the wilderness. So wherever there is a being baptized into Jesus Christ, there is a being baptized into his presence. Again, by the cloud raising up the soul there is a being caught up and separated from earth, and the things of time and sense. There is also a being baptized in the sea, for as the children of Israel were baptized in the Red Sea; so the saint of God is baptized in the sea of trouble; this is being immersed in the waves and billows that rolled over Christ's sacred head, and as he walks through this Red Sea, through these great tides, the Lord has promised that he will meet him. Held up by the cloud he has an union with the suffering Lord; he is baptized with him in the garden and upon the cross; and thus he is brought into union with his suffering Head, and thus he is grafted into Christ. He becomes one with Christ, and he, as the apostle speaks,

"Puts on Christ." Now, water baptism can never do this, it is but a shadow of a more enduring substance; it is but a type and figure of that which far exceeds it, as the substance exceeds the shadow.

But I pass on to our last point, which is *the putting on of Christ*.

You put on your clothes this morning; they are a shelter from the cold, and they are a covering necessary since the fall, for decency's sake; you wear them as your dress. Now, you know how you put them on. So there is a putting on of Christ. Have you put on Christ? You know your clothes, they lie before you; you put them on, and you clothed your body, and you knew that you were covered when you were clothed. Now, can you put on Christ and be insensible as to how, when, and where you put him on? Is he the clothing of your soul? Have you no hope but in his obedience and love? How can you stand before the awful bar of God unless you have put on Christ, unless you are clothed in Christ's righteousness, and covered from head to foot in his justifying obedience. There is a putting on Christ. My friends, I am glad to see you here this morning; I am glad to meet with so many of you. It is good for you to be under the sound of truth; to read the Bible is good; prayer is good—prayer to heaven; conversation with the saints of God is good; acts of liberality to saints of God are good; but what are these shells compared with the kernel—shadows compared with substances. When you stand before God's awful bar, will this be your plea,—"I attended chapel, talked with the saints of God, was very kind and liberal as far as my circumstances would allow?" Will you come with a covering like this? No; you would sooner call upon the rocks to hide you from the face of him that sits upon the throne, than come to the throne of God with a covering like this. Do you expect to

stand before that awful tribunal except by putting on Christ, so that he may be your covering? "Jesus thy blood and righteousness," as the hymn says, "my beauty are my glorious dress." Is that your plea? How else can we stand before the bar of God, except by putting on Christ? But, how do we put him on? By faith. God the Spirit brings him near; he is revealed to the soul; he is made manifest in his power and grace to the heart. Then the heart embraces him; receives him, puts him on, and he becomes the soul's wedding dress, the robe of righteousness; the soul's acceptance and justification before the throne of God. There is no standing except by putting on Christ, by putting on his lowly image, his holy example, his self-denying ways, and his lovely and suffering image, as our great pattern, our example in all things. As we put our clothes on, never going out of the house without them, so we must put on Christ, and never go abroad without him, never appear before any except Christ be on. When we go to the house of prayer, to have put Christ on before we came. When we hear, to be putting on Christ; when we speak, to be putting on Christ; whatever we are doing, to be putting on Christ. It is the work of the Christian to be putting on Christ, and how? By the power and help of God.

Here is a great error of the present day. People look to anything and everything but Christ. There is no putting on Christ, and if Christ is *not* put on, what can keep us from standing in our own nakedness and shame? Therefore, put on Christ, saint of God, as the Lord enables you.

Here it is—to believe in Christ, to be baptized in Christ by a spiritual work, and to put on Christ, so as to walk with him day by day, and to be clothed with his righteousness, sanctified by his grace, taught by his Spirit, conformed to his image, and following in his footsteps; and if that is not being

a Christian, never trust a single word that comes out of my lips again.—Receive it, lay it up in your heart, and the Lord enable you to enjoy the benefit of it.