

THE THREEFOLD OVERTHROW OF SELF

A Sermon Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, June 13, 1841,
at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."
Ezekiel 21:27

Before we enter into the spiritual and experimental meaning of this passage of Holy Writ, it may be desirable to advert for a few minutes to its literal signification, and to the circumstances under which these words were spoken by the Lord through his prophet Ezekiel.

These words were uttered, then, with reference to King Zedekiah, who at that time sat upon the throne of Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar had elevated him to the position which he then occupied; he had made him king, and, in making him king, he had exacted of him a solemn oath in the name of Jehovah, that he would be faithful to him as his sovereign **2Ch 36:13**. Now, this solemn oath, which Zedekiah had taken, he perfidiously broke, and rebelled against his master the king of Babylon, and gave his allegiance to the king of Egypt. It was, then, the breaking of this solemn oath, which he had taken in the name of the Lord, that so provoked the righteous anger of Jehovah against him; and, therefore, in this chapter he says: "And thou profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, remove the diadem and take off the crown" **Eze 21:25,26**. The Lord here remonstrates with him, and reproaches him for the violation of that solemn oath which he had taken; he calls him a "**profane** wicked prince," because he abode not by the solemn covenant which he had

made in his name, agreeably to those words **Eze 17:18,19**,—"Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head." But the Lord was resolved, not merely to remove this "profane wicked prince" from the throne, but he was determined to overturn the throne itself; not only to pull down this perjured king from the position which he then occupied, but to overthrow the kingdom also of Judah, by a complete overturning of it from its very foundation. And, therefore, when he had said: "And thou profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, remove the diadem, and take off the crown," he then goes on in the words of the text: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more" **that is, "it shall be no more" as a kingdom—it shall exist no more in its present state, "until he come whose right it is" that is the king of Zion, Jesus, the Lord of life and glory;** "and I will give it him;" in other words, there shall be no more a king in Judah—the kingdom shall no longer stand upon its present base; no temporal monarchy shall be there known, until he come whose right it is, and he shall set up his throne, not literally in Jerusalem,—but spiritually in Zion, that kingdom which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and I with my own hand, "I will give it him."

But having just adverted to the literal signification, we come now, with God's blessing, to the spiritual and experimental meaning of the words; and in so doing, we shall doubtless observe some analogy betwixt the two cases. If there were no analogy, there would be no foundation for the spiritual and experimental interpretation founded upon the passage. If

I could trace no resemblance betwixt the cases, all such experimental and spiritual interpretation would be merely fanciful and uncertain; it would be upon a wrong basis, and would stand upon an insecure foundation. And, therefore, I shall endeavour to show, before I enter into the spiritual and experimental meaning of the passage, that there is an analogy betwixt the literal and spiritual interpretation.

The people of Israel were a people of God's own choice, and as such were typical of the elect of God, whom he has chosen in Christ before all worlds. But this people swerved from their allegiance; they rebelled against the statutes and ordinances of God, which he had given them by the mouth of his servant Moses; they said, "Give us a king to judge us, like all the nations," and in demanding a king, the Lord said, by the mouth of Samuel **1 Samuel 8:7**, "That they had rejected him that he should not reign over them." This demanding, then, of a king that they might become like other nations was an act of daring rebellion on their parts, whereby they swerved from their allegiance to the "KING of kings and LORD of lords." The Lord, however, suffered them to continue under this kingly government until a certain time, until the reign of Zedekiah, when he overturned and utterly reduced this kingdom which they had set up to wreck and ruin. Is there not here an analogy and a resemblance betwixt the typical Israel and the spiritual Israel? As the typical Israel were chosen nationally that the Lord should be their king, so the spiritual Israel were chosen in Christ before all worlds, that he might reign in them. But as the literal Israel swerved from their allegiance by setting up another king than God, so the elect Israel swerved from their allegiance by falling in Adam; and by becoming subjects of sin and self, fell into a state of rebellion and alienation from God. There is an analogy, then, betwixt the literal kingdom of Israel, and the dominion of sin and self in the hearts of the elect before they are called by

sovereign grace. The Lord then says, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is," that is, I will make this kingdom of sin and self a heap of ruins; I will reduce it to a wreck; I will overturn it from its foundations, and upon the ruins of this kingdom, I will build up another. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more a kingdom as it was before, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."

Upon this resemblance, then, I hope, with God's blessing, this morning, to build up a spiritual and experimental interpretation of the text, and to show, if the Lord enable me, how it applies to the work of grace upon the hearts of God's people.

Now, if we look at the text, without making any formal divisions, we shall find that it consists of two leading branches.

I. The work of overturning which is thrice repeated; and then

II. What takes place in the soul, when the overturning is complete.

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it;" **that** is one branch of the Spirit's work. "Until he come whose right it is;" **there** is another branch of the Spirit's teaching in the soul, making Christ experimentally and spiritually known.

I. The most striking feature in these words is, that the Lord repeats three times the expression, "I will overturn it." It may indeed be said with respect to this repetition of the words three times, that it may signify the positiveness and certainty of God's determination.

Just in the same manner as, in the vision of Peter, we read, "This was done **thrice**, and the vessel was received up again into heaven," in order to show the certainty of the vision—to make more clear and manifest what was the will and purpose of God. And so, perhaps, the circumstance of the expression being repeated three times, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it," may be intended to convey with greater authority the certainty of it—that God by solemnly declaring it three times over, expresses thereby the positiveness of it in his own mind. But still I believe, if we come to look at it in a closer point of view, and trace it out according to the teachings of God the Holy Ghost in the hearts of God's people, we shall find that it is literally true,—that the repetition of it three times does not merely intend to express the certainty of God's overthrow of self in the soul, but that there are three distinct occasions—three clear, positive, and direct overturnings of self, and bringing it into utter ruin, in order to the setting up of Christ in his glory and beauty upon the wreck and ruins of the creature. And it is remarkable that there were three distinct overturnings of the kingdom of Judah, and a carrying of them into captivity three different times, as well as three distinct restorations; the **first** was the overthrow of Jehoiakim in the fourth year of his reign, the **second** that of Jehoiachin in the eighth year of his reign, and the **third** and last that of King Zedekiah, which the Lord here denounces by the mouth of his prophet, **2Ki 24:1,2 2Ki 24:12 2Ki 25:5,6**

Then what is the first overturning which takes place in the heart, when God the Holy Ghost begins the work of grace there? Where does the Spirit of God find us? He finds us, as the apostle speaks, "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts;" he finds us "dead in trespasses and sins," by nature the "children of wrath even as others;" he finds us under the

dominion of sin in some of those various shapes which sin assumes. Then, in order to the setting up of the kingdom of God in the soul, there must be an overthrow of the rule and reign of sin. Just as in the vision which Daniel saw, the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, smote the image upon his feet, and brake in pieces, not only the feet of iron and of clay, but all the other component parts of that image, the gold and the silver and the brass, and was set up upon the wreck and ruins of that image; so the kingdom of God is founded upon the wreck and ruin of self. There is no alliance betwixt unhumbled self and Christ, no more than there is concord between Christ and Belial. Christ never enters into confederacy so as to go halves with the creature, or takes self into partnership; he erects his blessed kingdom of righteousness and peace upon the wreck and ruin of self, and all the strength, wisdom, and righteousness of man must become, as it is said in Daniel, "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors," before the kingdom of God is blessedly revealed in the heart, and there made experimentally known.

1. The first prominent feature of self is in some cases **profane** self; that is, many of God's elect, before they are called by the blessed Spirit, are living in open profanity, in drunkenness, swearing, adultery, and the barefaced practice of notorious sins. But whenever the Spirit of God begins to work in the heart, he overturns profane self, that is, he brings such solemn convictions into the conscience—he shoots such arrows from the bow of God into the soul, that self in its profane shape is overcome and overthrown thereby. And there is every reason to doubt, whether God has began a work of grace upon that man's heart, in whose conscience the arrows of conviction have not been lodged, so as to cut the sinews, and let out the life-blood of profane self. If a man, professing the doctrines of grace, can live in any known sin, and without pangs of conscience and anguish

of spirit before God, there is every reason to believe that the Spirit of God has never set up his court of judgment in that man's breast. If profane self has never been arraigned at that bar—has never been condemned and imprisoned, there is no reason to believe, that the Spirit of God has come as the Spirit of judgment, and the Spirit of burning into that man's heart.

But there are others of God's elect, who, when he takes them in hand, are not wallowing in profane and open wickedness, and yet are living under the dominion of sin in other shapes—people who are what is called moral outwardly, but who are immoral inwardly; people who are not given up to the excesses of open riot, but are still living under the dominion of sin in other forms; who with a fair demeanour externally are still "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance and blindness of their heart;" who are under the reign and rule of self; who have no fear of God before their eyes, no spiritual sense of his heart-searching presence, and no desire to know and believe in, worship or love him. Now, these people need just as much that self should be overturned in its moral shape in them, as that self should be overturned in its immoral shape in the others. So long as God is barred out of the heart, it matters little, as far as salvation is concerned, whether a man is living in profaneness or in what is called morality. There is no life in that man's soul, no spiritual work, nothing in him of a heavenly birth so as to bring him into any acquaintance with God. Self still reigns and rules, and all the stronger from its very morality. It must, therefore, be cast down and overturned from its throne, and become a wreck and a ruin before God.

Well, but what is the instrument—the strong and powerful lever which the Holy Ghost applies to overthrow self in its

profane shape, and self in its moral shape? The spirituality of the law in the conscience, the discovery of God's holiness in the soul, the manifestation of his strict justice, and the bringing into the heart a sense of his unblemished purity. Now, the bare letter of the law cannot overthrow self, either immoral self or moral self; but the spirituality of God's law, the coming of the commandment with power, the solemn revelation of the wrath of God against all sin and transgression—this, in the hands of the Spirit is an effectual lever, to overthrow self in its moral shape as well as in its immoral shape, and bring it in to wreck and ruin before God,—that is to say, it exists, but it exists in ruins. The word "overturn" is applicable to a building which is overthrown by some stroke of lightning, or by some violent concussion, as the shock of an earthquake. It is overturned, not removed; not one stone is taken away, but the building lies in ruins. So with respect to sinful self; it is overthrown from its lofty position, hurled down from its standing; the building is no longer a complete edifice as before; it does not retain its former proportions; it is no longer a temple with distinct apartments, shrines, and altars, an abode swept and garnished for Satan; but though no one stone is removed utterly away, yet there remaineth not one stone upon another which is not thrown down. The difference between the building now, and the building then, is that **that** is now a ruin—a heap of confused rubbish—which formerly was a complete edifice.

Here, then, is a soul which stands overturned before God; a wreck and ruin before "the eyes of him with whom we have to do." But what will a man do when he is reduced to these circumstances? Why, he will begin to build, and will endeavour to set up a temple in which he believes God will take pleasure, of which he may approve, and which shall, in some measure, recommend him to Jehovah's favour. That is

the immediate feeling of every convinced sinner whose profaneness lies as a load of guilt on his conscience, and which has fallen into a heap of ruins before God. His object is to do something to blunt the edge of convictions in his conscience, to gain the favour of Jehovah, and to escape "the wrath to come." Now, usually, I believe, men take different roads according to the measure of light in their judgment. Where a man has never sat under the truth—where he has never heard of Christ's righteousness and salvation through the propitiation of the Son of God, his immediate recourse is to the law of works, that he, by strict obedience to its demands, may work out a righteousness which shall satisfy and please God. But where a man has had his judgment in some measure enlightened; where,—for instance, he has sat under truth, and heard of the blood of Christ as the only propitiation for sin, and of Christ's righteousness as the only way whereby he can stand justified before God, he seems in a manner cut off from the law of works, as having this conviction in his mind, "I can never make up a righteousness by the law of works, and, therefore, to flee to it for refuge will be utterly ineffectual." He adopts another course, which is to set up what is called **holiness**. When I was convinced of sin, and "brought in guilty before God," I had too much light in my judgment to fly to the Mosaic covenant of works. My judgment being well informed, I knew very well that legal righteousness could not stand me in any stead before God as a way of acceptance. My recourse was rather to turn the Gospel into law, and procure what is called holiness; not to go to the law of Moses for righteousness, but to the Gospel for holiness; not to try to obey the commandments in the Old Testament, but to seek to fulfil the precepts of the New; and by making myself spiritually-minded, by reading the Scriptures and prayer, to clothe myself in the character given in the New Testament of a Christian. This is indeed the worst of legality, for it is perverting the Gospel into law; but still it

seems a different path from running to the Mosaic law of works for salvation. The man, then, whose judgment is in some measure informed, will try hard, perhaps, to make himself holy, to be spiritually-minded, to fix his affections upon God, to renounce everything which is contrary to the Word of God as spoken by the mouth of Christ, and thus to seek in some way to make himself a Christian, and then to obtain access to God by that Christianity. This is what Romaine calls somewhere, "self-righteousness new christened holiness." Here he is, then, embarked upon this course, to become holy and spiritually-minded, to serve God, to obey his precepts, to read his Word, to join his people, to come out from the world, and with the utmost power and strongest bent of his soul, to become a Christian indeed.

2. Now, there must be as much an overturning of this self-righteousness, whether in its strictly legal shape, or "new christened holiness," as there must be an overturning of a man's profanity. The object of the overturning is to overthrow self—self setting itself up in opposition to Christ. And, therefore, be it profane self, it must be overturned; or be it righteous self, it must be overturned; or be it holy self, it must be overturned. Self in all its shapes, forms, and guises, must be overturned and brought to a heap of ruins, that Christ may be exalted wholly and solely upon the ruins of self. A **second** overturning, then, is necessary, an overthrow of righteous or holy self. And what is the Lord's lever to overturn this second temple, built out of the ruins of the first, but not "the place of big rest," as being still the work of men's hands? A spiritual discovery of the deep pollution of our hearts and natures before him. Profanity is overturned by the application of the law with power to the conscience; but this false holiness, this mock spirituality, is overturned by the discovery to our consciences of the deep pollution that lurks in our carnal minds; this is more or less

the breaking up of "the fountains of the deep," and discovering with power to the conscience the truth of those words: "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." As we try, then, to be holy, sin rises up from the depths of our carnal mind, and overturns that fabric which we are seeking to erect. Every thought now appears polluted with sin—every word in some way tainted with corruption—every action infected with evil, so that we fall down before God with self-abhorrence and self-loathing, and feel that there is not a word in our mouth, or an action in our hands, with which sin is not intermixed, which inward iniquity has not defiled, and for which, therefore, we do not feel condemned and self-abhorred before God. Here, then, is a man who stands before God, not merely with profane self a heap of ruins, but also with righteous self and holy self a heap of ruins too. But when profane self, righteous self, and holy self, have been thus overthrown, the doctrines of grace as made known by the Spirit now become sweet and suitable. Having no holiness in self, Christ's sanctification becomes meditated upon finding nothing in self to please God with, the blood of the atonement becomes opened up as a doctrine which is sweet and suitable to our case; being destitute of creature-righteousness, Christ's glorious righteousness shines in the Scriptures as a truth which just fits in with our condition. The Spirit, then, brings home the doctrine of election with some power to the heart and some sweetness to the conscience; he shows the soul in some faint measure the blood of the atonement, and as he sprinkles it upon the conscience, a taste of his mercy is blessedly experienced. He brings Christ's righteousness near, and as the soul gets a sight of that righteousness by the eye of faith, it rests therein, and feels a sweet satisfaction in that righteousness, and utterly discards its own.

3. And now let us trace a little what course self will steer. Why, this restless wretch now runs in another channel, which is to slight the solemn inward teaching of God, and to take hold of the doctrines of grace by the hand of nature, without waiting to have these heavenly truths applied, from time to time, by the mouth of God to our hearts. And as some sweetness has been felt in them, there seems to be some warrant for so doing. But presumption creeps upon us in such imperceptible and subtle ways, that we scarcely know we are in that delusive path before we find a precipice at the end of the road. And what has led us there? Our pride and ambition, which are not satisfied with being nothing, with occupying the place where God puts us, and being in that posture where he himself sets us down. We must needs grasp at something beyond God's special teachings in the soul; we must needs exalt our stature beyond the height which God himself has given us, adding a cubit to our dwarfish proportions.

Here, then, is the **third** form of self which is to be overturned, as much as the two preceding forms, and that is **presumptuous** self, so that we have self in its three bearings: first, profane self; secondly, righteous self; and thirdly, presumptuous self. Profane self was self in ignorance of the doctrines of grace at all; righteous self was self in ignorance of these doctrines as spiritually made known to the heart; and presumptuous self is self which after the soul had tasted some measure of these doctrines, and had felt something of their sweetness and their power, secretly and imperceptibly thrust it beyond its real standing into a carnal resting upon them. Well, then, self in all its three forms—self in profanity, self in self-righteousness, and self in presumption—must be overturned in a man, that he may be a wreck before God and a heap of ruins, so that one stone shall not stand upon another; the former proportions and

harmony of the building lost and gone; the proud columns which supported it fallen; and roof and walls mingled together undistinguished amidst heaps of rubbish, because the Lord "has stretched over it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness."

II. But we come now to the second part of the text, which is, the setting up of the kingdom of God on the ruins of self. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."

There is one, then, to come, "whose right it is;" there is a king who has a right to the throne, and to the allegiance of his subjects; a right to all that they are and to all that they have. But whence has he gained this right? "Until he come whose **right** it is." It is his right then, first, by original **donation** and **gift**, the Father having given to the Son all the elect. "Here am I," says Jesus, "and the children that thou **hast given me.**" "All that the **Father giveth** me shall come to me." Then, so far as we are his, Jesus has a right to our persons; and in having a right to our persons, he has, by the same original donation of God the Father, a right to our hearts and affections. But he has another right, and that is by **purchase** and **redemption**, he having redeemed his people with his own blood—having laid down his life for them, and thus bought and purchased them, and so established a right to them by the full and complete price which he himself paid down upon the cross for them. This twofold right he exercises every time that he lays a solemn claim to any one of the people whom he has purchased. And this claim he lays when the blessed Spirit comes into the soul to arrest and apprehend a vessel of mercy, and bring it to his feet, that he may be enthroned as King and Lord in its affections. For be it remembered, that the possession of the heart, with all its affections, is his right; and "his glory he will

not give to another," his property he will not allow to pass into other hands; he is not satisfied with merely having a right to the persons of his dear people, he must have their hearts; and in exercising his right to their affections, he will reign and rule supreme, allowing no rival, admitting no cooperation with self in any shape or form, but he himself to be established as King and Lord there. Then where is the soul before he comes into it in power, in sweetness, in beauty, in preciousness? What and where is it? A heap of ruins. And no man ever knew much of the preciousness of Christ, whose soul was not a heap of ruins, and in whom self had not been overturned and cast to the ground. Nay; no man ever ardently panted that the Lord of life and glory should visit his heart with his salvation, should come in the power of his resurrection, in the glory of his righteousness, in the preciousness of his presence—no man ever spiritually desired, sighed, cried, groaned, sued, and begged for the manifestation of Christ to his soul, who was not a ruined wretch before God, and in whom self had not been overturned so as to be a desolate heap, so overthrown that all the power of man could not put any one stone in its place, or rebuild the former edifice.

"Until **he come** whose right it is." Then there is a coming of Jesus into the souls of his people; not a coming into their judgments to inform their heads; not a coming into their minds merely to enable them to speak with their tongues concerning him; but there is a solemn coming of Christ, with power and glory and grace and majesty into the souls and consciences of his elect family, whereby he sets up his kingdom upon its basis, erects a temple for himself, and builds up his own throne of mercy and truth upon the ruins of self. He does not take the stones of this fallen edifice, and set them up one upon another; nor does he allow profane self to stretch forth its hand, and set the pillars of the original

temple in their places; nor does he suffer righteous self to reconstruct the ruined building; nor does he admit presumption to play the architect; but he comes himself into the soul and erects his own blessed kingdom of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," upon the wreck and ruin of self in all its forms, shapes, and bearings.

But this is not a work which is once done, and needs no more repetition. Though there are three solemn overturnings, more or less, in a man's heart and conscience, we are not to suppose, that when these three solemn overturnings have taken place, that there is no more overturning work to be done—that Christ comes into the heart in his beauty and glory, and then there is no more pickaxe or spade or lever to be employed. For we must bear in mind, that this wreck and ruin of self is not a heap of dead stones. Self is a **living** principle; not a slaughtered and buried rebel, but a breathing antagonist to the Lord of life and glory. Self will ever work, then, against his supreme authority, and will ever rebel against his sovereign dominion. And therefore, though on three special occasions, and though in three distinct senses, most of us, who know anything of the work of grace, have experienced these three overturnings, yet if we look into our hearts, we shall find that day by day we need this overturning work to be done afresh, and again and again repeated in us. For instance, sometimes profane and sinful self stretches forth its hand to put together these stones which the application of God's law cast down, seeking to erect that temple again, and to put into that temple those images of jealousy, which God looks upon with abhorrence. Who of us (**with shame be it spoken**), who of us has not secretly been indulging in trains of evil thoughts? Who has not been laying, in some manner, plans of sin? Who has not been feeding upon this vile garbage? Who has not felt the

love of sin in the carnal mind manifesting it in the secret cravings after it? And if God's grace did not powerfully work in the conscience, who of us would not have fallen headlong into some of those snares and gins and traps, by which we should have disgraced ourselves and the church to which we belong? But there is also righteous self and holy self, which are putting forth their hands again to erect this temple. Have we not endeavoured in some measure, to make ourselves spiritual and holy before God, and work ourselves up into a religious frame, which shall be acceptable in his sight, and so recommend ourselves to his favour; feeling as though now we were pleasing him, and putting ourselves into a fitting posture to receive tokens of mercy from him? Well, then, no sooner does our self-righteous heart put forth its hand to set up this false holiness, this meek spirituality, than the Lord has to take his lever, and overturn holy self in our hearts now, as he overthrew holy self in our hearts before. And who, again, of us, that knows anything of his own heart and the workings of his own fallen nature, does not know, that presumptuous self is continually putting forth its hand to touch the ark, and is often intruding itself into the presence of God, without the Lord himself calling us there by his Spirit, laying hold of things which God himself has not sweetly and powerfully revealed, trusting in doctrines and hanging upon truths of which the power is not, at that moment, sweetly and experimentally felt? Do we not continually trace the workings of that presumption which puts forth its hand again to set up that building which God's grace has cast down? Now, just in proportion as self, in its various forms, sets up its idols against the Lord of life and glory, just so does the Lord fulfil his own solemn denunciation: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it." Does profane self work? The Lord overturns profane self by cutting us up with sharp convictions, by breaking the snares in which we were entangled, by opening to us the evil of the things in which we

were indulging, or which withdrew us from our proper dependence on him. Thus he overthrows profane self. Again, when holy—mock holy self would, as it were, seek in some way to set up its own holiness and its own righteousness, against Christ's holiness and Christ's righteousness, is there not some deep discovery of our fallen nature, some sense of our pollution before God, some solemn feeling of the dreadful state of our corrupt hearts before him, which, when experimentally felt our consciences, overthrows this mock holy self; and makes us "abhor ourselves in dust and ashes?" When, again, presumptuous self comes forth from its secret cave, pushing us beyond our real standing, and seeking to draw us away from an experimental knowledge of the truth, is there not some secret pang of conscience, some inward shrinking of soul, some painful conviction that we are treading upon forbidden ground, some awe and reverence of God's heart-searching presence, so that, with all the presumption that lurks in our carnal minds, there is a groaning prayer to him, that he would not allow this base corruption of our hearts to work up to offend him and to grieve us?

Well, then, as the Lord keeps overturning self in its various shapes and bearing, he builds up Christ upon the wreck and ruin of self. Does a man see all his worldly plans frustrated? Does he find that the world can give him no pleasure? Does he feel that he "cannot do the thing that he would," and that all his purposes and schemes and contrivances are broken, so that he "cannot find his hands?" When thus convinced, he falls down a guilty sinner before God, abhorring himself on account of the workings of his base heart, the Lord will sometimes drop into his soul some sense of reconciliation, some tokens of forgiving love, some drops of atoning blood, and thus draw forth his affections, and Christ becomes exceeding precious. And so again, when mock holy self and

all creature righteousness is utterly disclaimed, there will be at times some sweet apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness and sanctification, so that the soul is glad that self should be abased, and that Christ should be exalted upon its ruins. And so when cursed presumption is checked in the heart, and we are brought to confess it before God, and to abhor ourselves for it, does not the Lord bedew the soul sometimes with a sense of his mercy, in not cutting us off on account of those daring acts of rebellion against him, but meekens our spirits and leads us to the foot of the cross, desiring to feel the sweet manifestation of Christ's presence, the application of his atoning blood, and to rejoice in him and in him alone? But wherever self rises up as a rebel against Christ, be it self in profaneness, self in mock holiness, or self in presumption, there is no sweet appearance of Christ, no humbling sense of mercy, no lying at his feet, no dew of the Spirit's favour in the heart. And thus, it is only when the soul is broken down and overturned and overthrown, that Christ, in a measure, to each according to his faith and the depth of manifestation, becomes sweetly and abidingly precious.

But again, the Lord will overturn everything which is against the kingdom and reign of Christ in the heart, as, for instance, whatever plan we undertake which would in any way set up self. There are many worldly plans that a man undertakes; and what is the real object of them? It is, in some measure, to be independent of God's providence; it is, in some way, to seek gratification and ease for the flesh; or to get out of a painful, self-denying, and distressing path. Well, whatever plan we endeavour to bring about which is contrary to God's purpose, and which is contrary to the exaltation of Christ in our hearts—that plan must be overturned. The Lord himself will bring it to nought; the Lord himself will make it a heap of ruins before our eyes; and the Lord himself, in his own time, will show us why he has reduced it to wreck and ruin.

Because, had the plan succeeded, had the purpose of our hearts prospered, the glory of Christ in us would have been obscured, and we should not have been reduced to those circumstances to which Christ is adapted, and in which he is made experimentally known.

So again, if we chalk out a path in religion, wherein we shall attempt to walk, perhaps, to make ourselves wise in the letter, to stand upon the doctrines of grace without feeling their power, to rest upon the good opinion of ministers, to stand in other people's experience, to lean upon any vain delusive prop, or to rest upon any other foundation than "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory"—whatever plan or device it be that we are seeking to set up, it will be overthrown: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it," saith the Lord; and overturned, overturned it shall be, if it be inconsistent with God's appointment, if it be not compatible with the manifestation of Christ to the heart. Yes, everything, take it a worldly shape or a religious shape, everything of every kind and form that is contrary to the decrees of God, and contrary to the manifestation of Christ's glory in our hearts, shall be sooner or later made a heap of ruins before our eyes; that "the rich man may not glory in his riches, nor the wise man glory in his wisdom," but that "he that glorieth may glory in the Lord," that Christ may be all in all in us, and all in all for us, and that we may have nothing in self wherein to boast and whereon to rest, but that all our salvation and all we spiritually are and have, may come from, and centre in him.

"He shall come whose right it is." If we are his, he has a right to our hearts. Is a husband satisfied with merely possessing the person of his wife? It is her heart and affections that he wants. What is the wife's person without the wife's love? So the Lord of life and glory does not merely want the persons

of his people. It is their hearts and affections that he claims; it is there that he sets up himself; it is to them that he establishes his right. Therefore every idol must go down, sooner or later, because the idol draws away the affections of the soul from Christ. Everything that is loved in opposition to God must sooner or later be taken away, that the Lord Jesus may be worshipped alone; everything which exacts the allegiance of the soul must be overthrown, so that he may come whose right it is.

"I will give it him." I will put him into full possession of it; for "he must reign until he shall put all enemies under his feet." "He shall sit upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." "I will give it him." It is no matter of creature choice, it is not a thing which may be or may not be, but it rests upon God's eternal appointment. "I will **give** it him." He shall have the heart and affections, but in having the heart and affection, he shall have it wholly, solely, and undividedly—he shall have it entirely for himself, he shall reign and rule supreme. Now, here comes the conflict and the struggle. Self says, "I will have a part." Self wants to be honoured, admired, set up, bowed down to; self wants to indulge in and gratify its desires; self wants, in some way, to erect its throne in opposition to the Lord of life and glory. But he says, "No—I most reign supreme." Whatever it be that stands up in opposition to him, down it must go. Just as Dagon fell down before the ark, so self must fall down before Christ. In every shape, in every form, whatever subtle guise self wears, down it must come to a wreck and ruin before the King of Zion. Then if we are continually building up self, there will be a continual overthrowing of self; if we are setting up images of jealousy, there shall be a casting of them down; if we are continually hewing out "cisterns that can hold no water," there will be a continual dashing to pieces of these cisterns. If we think highly of our knowledge, we must be

reduced to perfect folly; if we are confident of our strength, we must be reduced to perfect weakness; if we highly esteem our attainments, we must be brought to doubt whether they are spiritual and Divine. If we, in any measure, rest upon the power of the creature, the power of the creature must be overthrown, so that we shall stand weak before God, unable to lift up a finger to deliver our souls from going down into the pit. In this way does the Lord teach his people the lesson, that Christ must be all in all. They learn, not in the way of speculation, nor in the way of dry doctrine,—not from the mouth of others, but they learn these lessons in painful soul-experience. And every living soul that is sighing and longing after a manifestation of Christ and desiring to have him enthroned in the heart, every such soul will know, sooner or later, an utter overthrow of self, a thorough prostration of this idol, a complete breaking to pieces of this beloved image, that the desire of the righteous may be granted, and that Christ may reign and rule as King and Lord in him and over him, setting up his blessed kingdom there, and winning to himself every affection of the renewed heart.

"Until he come whose **right** it is." Is it not his right? Has he not established it? Has he not in some measure won our hearts to submit to it? Are there not moments, friends, are there not some few and fleeting moments when the desire of our souls is, that Christ should be our Lord and God; when we are willing that he should have every affection, that every rebellious thought should be subdued and brought into obedience to the cross of Christ, that every plan should be frustrated which is not for the glory of God and our soul's spiritual profit? Are there not seasons in our experience when we can lay down our souls before God, and say "Let Christ be precious to my soul, let him come with power to my heart, let him set up his throne as Lord and King, and let self be

nothing before him?" Well, we utter these prayers in sincerity and simplicity, we desire these prayers to be fulfilled; but oh, the struggle! the conflict! when God answers these petitions. When our plans are frustrated, what a rebellion works up in the carnal mind! When self is cast down, what a rising up of the fretful, peevish impatience of the creature! When the Lord does answer our prayers, and strips off all false confidence; when he does remove our rotten props, and dash to pieces our broken cisterns, what a storm—what a conflict takes place in the soul! Angry with the Lord for doing the very work we have asked him to do, rebelling against him for being so kind as to answer those petitions that we have offered up, and ready to fume and fret against the very teaching, for which we have supplicated him with many desires. Be he is not to be moved; he will take his own way. "I will overturn," let the creature say what it will; "I will overturn," let the creature think what it will. Down it shall go to ruin, it shall come to a wreck, it shall be overthrown. My purpose shall be accomplished, and I will fulfill all my pleasure. But I will overturn, not to destroy, not to cast into eternal perdition, but I will overturn the whole building to erect a far more goodly edifice. Self is a rebel who has set up an idolatrous temple, and I will overturn and bring the temple to ruin, for the purpose of manifesting my glory and my salvation, that I may be your Lord and your God.

Then shall we not, with our hearts and minds thank the Lord for the many blessings, in disguise, that he has thus bestowed upon us? Shall we not bow down before his altar and worship at his footstool? If God has overturned our bright prospects, shall we say it was a cruel hand that laid them low? If he has overthrown our worldly plans, shall we say it was an unkind act? If the Lord has reduced our false righteousness to a heap of rubbish, in order that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, shall we say it was a cruel

deed? Is he an unkind father that takes away poison from his child and gives him food? Is she a cruel mother that snatches her boy from the precipice on which it was playing? No. The kindness was manifested in the act of snatching the child from destruction. So if the Lord has broken and overthrown our purposes, it was a kind act; for in so doing he brings us to nothing, that Christ may be embraced as our all in all, that our hearts may echo back, "The right is his, let him exercise it." O Lord, fulfil all thine own promises in our souls, and make us willing to be nothing, that upon the nothingness of self the glory and beauty and preciousness of Christ may be spiritually exalted!