

AN EARNEST APPEAL:

OR,

THE CHIEF POINTS OF A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

ROBERT McLAUCHLAN,

CLEVELAND, OHIO.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

“Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”—JAMES i: 15.

PRESS OF

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY,

PHILADELPHIA.

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"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. . . . Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—ISAIAH lv. 3, 6, 7.

PROPHETS and apostles have been commissioned by the Almighty God, the benevolent Parent of the human family, to go forth and proclaim His will to fallen men. They have come with hearts *overflowing* with benevolence and filled with pity for human woe. They have scanned the earth, blighted by the curse of sin, and have wept in bitter sorrow at the general desolation.

Under these circumstances, with hearts thus filled with love, and with the tender chord of pity made to vibrate at the sad scene which sin hath wrought on earth, and

at the same time being the commissioned ambassadors of heaven with a message from the throne on high sent to fallen men, need we wonder at the earnestness with which they enter upon their work when they exclaim, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!"

And should we not expect the earth to hearken with *solemn, rapt, and profound interest* to the heavenly message? and when that message is found to convey words of *peace, pardon, and forgiveness*, how universal and rapturous should we expect the response to be!

But, alas! instead of all this, the earth is too busy with the business affairs, the frivolities and pleasures of life, to find time to listen to such a message, and consequently the ambassadors have had to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

This is discouraging, but nevertheless the gospel message must be proclaimed. The Church is still commanded to say, "Come." Jesus still stands at the right hand of the Father to plead for all who come unto God by Him.

To those who have not yet believed the report of the prophets and apostles, and to whom the arm of the Lord has not yet been revealed in its saving power,—to you I would say, in all earnestness and affection, Repent, and believe *the* gospel; not a gospel of man's invention, but the good news or glad tidings of the kingdom of God as unfolded in the written Word. To-day the Saviour calls on you to come; all things are ready for your reception; Jesus died for you as a manifestation of *Jehovah's love*, and such a manifestation as made angels wonder, devils tremble, and may well make mortal man, on whom it is lavished, to rejoice. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

What although we were possessed of all the wealth of the world, with the combined wisdom of all the philosophers, ancient and modern, if we are destitute of eternal life? It would all amount to just nothing at all, in view of its transitory, fleeting duration. "For the things that are seen are *temporal*, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

Oh, then, hear the joyful news that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them! and the proclamation has been issued from the court of heaven, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will pardon,—yea, *abundantly pardon.*

In view of the fulness and freeness of the offer of salvation to lost and ruined man, I have often been forced to exclaim, Oh, how good is our God, and how transcendently glorious the glad tidings He has given us to proclaim! Let me tell you what we are looking for. We are looking for Jesus to come again to earth,—that same Jesus who, when He dwelt on earth, was so full of tender compassion and pity for human woe, whose hand was ever ready to help, and whose voice ceased not to comfort the afflicted and to warn and instruct those who were shrouded in mental and moral darkness. He who healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons, raised the dead. Wit-

ness His divine power and tender emotions by the grave of Lazarus, and also by the bier of the son of the widow of Nain; then listen to His lamentations over Jerusalem, where He had been defamed and persecuted. As He overlooked the unrepenting and doomed city He wept over it, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wing, but ye would not." And again, while suspended on the cross, His thoughts were turned from His own sufferings to pray for His murderers,— "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We look for His return to complete the work of restitution; to gather the dispersed of Judah into one; to raise up the throne of David, which is fallen down, in harmony with Ezekiel xxi. 27, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it:"—the throne and kingdom of David—"and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." And also with Luke i. 32, 33, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign

over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end." You know that when He was here before, and just before He departed, He said to His disciples, "Whither I go, ye cannot come;" "A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me;" "If I go away I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiii. 33; xiv. 3; xvi. 16). And having led His apostles out as far as Bethany, He was parted from them while in the act of blessing them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight; and while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them, in white apparel, who also said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in *like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven." Mark the language,—*"in like manner,"*—that is, bodily, personally. And having reached the threshold of His heavenly home, the message which He sent back to His beloved apostle, and through him to the loved ones of earth, was, "*Surely,*

I come quickly.” And already the apocalyptic cry has gone forth, “Behold, he cometh with clouds.” And, says the prophet Zechariah, “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley” (Zech. xiv. 4). And thus shall be inaugurated the physical changes that He will work on the planet earth, when instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: the wilderness and the solitary place shall be made glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose (Isa. lv. 13, and xxxv. 1).

We are looking for *honor, glory, and immortality* at the coming of the Son of man (Rom. ii. 7), when these poor, frail, mortal bodies of His saints shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil. iii. 21), and free from pain and death, because *incorruptible and immortal*.

We are looking for a glorious and happy home, not beyond the clouds, but on the planet earth,—yes, this earth renovated and

transformed by the power of God. The tide of sin rolled back, and the curse wiped out; all things made new like Eden fair and bright (Isa. lxxv. 17). In short, we are looking for *the kingdom of God* spoken of by the prophet Daniel (chapter vii., verse 27), to be established *under* the whole heaven, and which shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, who shall become kings and priests unto God and reign on the earth (Rev. v. 10): the land covenanted to Abraham and his seed, the land of Canaan, being the kingdom proper, while the territory or dominion of Messiah, who is the seed spoken of, shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth (Psa. lxxii. 8; Zech. ix. 10).

That Messiah is the seed spoken of will appear abundantly plain from Paul's letter to the Galatians, iii. 16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

This is the kingdom which John the Baptist preached, and in view of which he called on the people to *reform*. This is the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed after that

John was cast into prison. To publish the good news concerning this coming kingdom Jesus sent forth His twelve apostles and His seventy disciples, and for this purpose He issued the commission,—“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”

This is *our* faith and hope; it is the one faith and hope of the gospel (Ephes. iv. 4), and we are commanded to *ask* you; to *invite* you; and to *entreat* you, to share with us the regal honors of that kingdom. The God of heaven is now taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts xv. 14), to make them kings and priests in the new dispensation, the Age to come, called also the times of the restitution of all things spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets (Acts iii. 21). He is calling them by the proclamation of this gospel, cleansing them by the washing of water by the Word (Ephes. v. 26), and in due time they shall be clothed with fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints, and anointed for their sacerdotal office. This is

our high calling, and we invite you to share with us in this royal priesthood called to minister under the new and better covenant.

Alas! that, notwithstanding such an high destiny is presented to man, and such incentives to holiness and virtue, so many should be found who prefer to degrade themselves by ministering to the gratification of the desires and appetites of their fallen nature, who prefer the service of sin and Satan, which terminates in eternal death, to the service of the living and true God, having their fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

This is a sad and melancholy picture, but such is the perverseness of human nature that future good of the most exalted kind is sacrificed for present enjoyment; and instead of life being controlled and governed by fundamental and abiding principles, the mass of mankind are mere creatures of impulse, actuated by the wants and wishes of the present hour; and there are many craven, cowardly spirits who are ever ready to ask themselves what would such an one think were I to do so and so, than to inquire earn-

estly, with an open heart and a willing mind, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*"

No wonder, then, that so many are groping their way in midnight darkness. We would seek to reach such, and try to arouse them to a sense of their danger. We would place before them *higher motives*, and give their life a *nobler aim*; we would seek to awaken within them a desire for *truth*, a longing after *heavenly wisdom*, a thirst for divine knowledge. Incline your ear and come to Jesus; listen to the call; hear, and your soul shall live (Isa. lv. 1). Shall love so generous, so divine, awaken no response in your souls?

Let me remind you of the solemn truth that *your* day of grace and *mine* will soon terminate and the record be forever closed.

There was an incident connected with the loss of the steamer "Central America" which it may not be inappropriate to mention here. Some years ago, in a place of public worship, a stranger arose and begged the privilege to speak, announcing himself as captain of a vessel then in port, and a professor of the religion of Christ. "I wish," says he, "to warn the impenitent here that delays are dangerous. It is not

safe to put off until to-morrow what ought to be done this day. It was my lot, when sailing, to fall in with that ill-fated steamer the 'Central America.' The night was closing in, the waves rolling high, but I hailed the crippled steamer and asked if they needed help. 'I am in a sinking condition,' cried Captain Herndon. 'Had you not better send your passengers on board now?' I replied. 'Will you not lay by me until morning?' responded Captain Herndon. 'I will try,' I replied; 'but had you not better send your passengers on board?' 'Lay by me till morning,' again said Captain Herndon. I made the effort to lay by him, but at night, with such a sea rolling, no vessel could control its position, and I never saw the steamer more. In one hour and a half after the captain said 'Lay by me till morning' the vessel, with its living freight, went down, and he himself, with a great majority of his passengers and crew, were confined in the deep. So much for procrastination. But for this delay the entire crew and passengers of the 'Central America' might have been saved. Sinners, when urged to immediate repentance, don't say to

beseeching friends, to offered mercy, to a striving Spirit, 'Not now; lay by me longer still, till I have a convenient time.'"

Behold! *now* is the accepted time, and *now* is the day of salvation. What more can be said to urge on you the necessity of an *immediate* acceptance of the proffered mercy? The present moment alone is yours. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. The Church is commissioned to say come, and to-day the invitation is made to you, "Come with us and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Shall these words of warning be allowed to die away on the wind, and no echo in your hearts answer the entreaties of Jehovah's Spirit? Let me urge on you, as one who has felt the power of divine truth on my own heart, "Be ye reconciled to God." Repent and believe the gospel, the good news that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. And here let me define what we understand by repentance. Some think it simply sorrow for sin, but the Scripture says, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance"

(2 Cor. vii. 10); hence it is more than sorrow for sin,—it is a forsaking of sin, a turning away from it, a renouncing of sin, and a consecration to God through faith and obedience. It is not a dead, inoperative thing, but such as John the Baptist describes,—that bringeth forth fruits meet for repentance.

God is waiting to be gracious, not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn unto Him and live. Reject not, I entreat you, the offered mercy. Pardon and forgiveness are held out to you, and eternal life in the kingdom of God's dear Son. Through the first Adam we inherit frail, mortal, perishing bodies, subject to trials, perplexities, disease, and death; and it is only through Christ Jesus we can have *deliverance*; for there is no other name given under heaven and among men whereby we can be saved. He is the Prince of Life, the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. If we want eternal life we must accept of it in God's own way. It is not ours to make or change the divine plan; we can only accept or reject the offered mercy.

When Naaman the Syrian came to Elisha the prophet to be cleansed of his leprosy, the

command, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean," appeared unreasonable, and *Naaman was wroth* (2 Kings v. 12). And so with many an one covered with the leprosy of sin. The deadly disease is gnawing at their vitals, while death, the wages of sin, is staring them in the face. There is only one way of escape,—one Deliverer; and still fallen men are ever trying to change Jehovah's plan and suggest other ways. But still the Word of God remains the same,—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.” We entreat you, therefore, to believe the record which God has given of His Son, and be baptized in His name for the remission of your sins. Put off the old man with his deeds, be renewed in the spirit of your minds, live godly and righteously in this present evil world, and wait patiently for the glory to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is heaven's appointed plan; are you willing to close with the offer of salvation and become an heir of eternal life,—an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ,

when He shall come to restore all things spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began? For the heavens will receive Him *until* that time of restitution, and *then* He will come, for the Lord is not slack concerning His promises as men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. iii. 9). But the day of the Lord will come, and come as a thief in the night,—are *you* ready for that day? No one can tell how soon it may come. And how fearful to be caught unprepared! Are we building on the Rock, Christ? Other foundation can no man lay than what is laid, that is Christ. But let every man take heed how he builds thereon, for the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. The wood, hay, stubble, will be consumed, but the precious stones will be enduring. Friends, on what do your hopes rest? Have you accepted Jesus as your Life-giver? have you believed God's Word, and are you trusting in His promises? Or are you among those who are making void God's Word by holding the traditions of men? Remember what Christ said to

the Jews,—“In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. xv. 9). This shows us that there is a *vain worship*, and it consists in teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, which subvert God’s plan.

No sooner had Adam transgressed God’s law in *Paradise* than he was expelled from Eden’s fair garden; but we must view this as a loving act of a tender parent to a *fallen* son. Let the language of the Almighty be a key to the motive by which He was actuated, and be it remembered that immediately after the transgression, and just before the expulsion, God had made known His gracious purpose that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head,—thereby denoting the *final* and *utter* extinction of evil at some period, however remote. Of this purpose and design on the part of the Almighty we have *abundant, clear, and positive* testimony both in the writings of the Old and New Testaments. See Gen. iii. 15; Psa. cxlv. 20; Malachi iv. 1; Heb. xii. 29, and ii. 14; Rev. i. 18, and v. 13. And in order to carry out this *benevolent* and GRACIOUS purpose on the part of the Creator, the expulsion of Adam

became a necessity. It was a prominent link in the continuous chain of man's redemption. Hence we are prepared to understand God's own language as recorded in Gen. iii. 22,—“Now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: *therefore*”—please mark the language, *therefore*, on that account—“the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence *he was taken.*”—LOWLY ORIGIN!—“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” Thus we see that the final *extinction of evil* and the *expulsion of Adam* from his primeval abode are very *intimately* connected. The alliance is close and inseparable, and when viewed in this light, instead of the expulsion being an act of vengeance, we can only regard it as the operation of God's *benignity*; and as intelligent believers we can only thank God that He “drove out the man,” and join in a loud and joyous anthem to Him whose mercy endureth forever, and who so loved and pitied our fallen race that He sent His Son,

His well-beloved and only-begotten Son, into the world “not to condemn the world, but that”—observe the language, *but that*, this is Jehovah’s object and intention in sending His Son,—namely, that “the world through him might be saved” (John iii. 17). Oh, *infinite goodness!* UNBOUNDED LOVE! But a false system of theology has perverted the Word, and with *unhallowed, unsanctified, and profane* imagery represented the Father as *vindictive and implacable*, whose indignation and ire could only be modified by the “*rich drops of Jesus’ blood.*” This system of theology says God loves the world because Jesus died! The blessed Word says Jesus died *because* God *loved* the world, and loved it so much that He gave His Son to die that *whosoever*—this word, *whosoever*, includes you and me and every one—that *whosoever* believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.

Do *you* want everlasting life,—incorruptibility in the kingdom of God? Do you want to live *on and on* during the endless ages of eternity, in the *new earth*, and the *Paradise of God*, in the society of Jesus and the redeemed of every age and clime, where

there is no more pain, nor sorrow, nor death; for the former things will have passed away? If so, you can secure this inheritance. Jesus died for *you* that *you* might live,—*live forever!* The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. “And *this is the record*, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John v. 11, 12). Do you believe the record? John says, “*this is the record.*” Do you believe it? Do not, I beseech you, try to evade the question; be honest with yourselves! Remember that without faith it is *impossible* to please God. And remember also the apostle’s definition of faith,—“Now faith is the substance”—the ground or confidence—“of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. xi. 1).

Do *you* hope for eternal life through the Son of God; or do you vainly flatter yourself by the idea of inherent immortality? Faith is the belief of what God says in His written Word. “These are written,” says the Scripture, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and

that believing ye might have life through his name" (John xx. 31). The Christ is the Anointed, the Messiah (John i. 41, and margin).

This is the *promise* that He hath promised us, even *eternal life* (1 John ii. 25). What are the terms or conditions of the promise? Faith and obedience. He that believeth the gospel, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned. If we believe the witness of men the witness of God is greater, *infinitely greater*. Let us set to our seal "*that God is true*" (John iii. 33).

Now remember that through Jesus Christ is this day preached to you the *forgiveness* of sins (Acts xiii. 38). May Christ never say to you as He said unto the Jews,—“Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” He offers it to you freely in His Word, without money and without price, but you must *come* to Him for it. “And the Spirit and the Bride say, *Come*. And let him that heareth say, *Come*. And let him that is athirst *come*. And *whosoever* will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. xxii. 17).

Oh! say will you go to our Eden home,

where sin and sorrow are unknown, and bask in the bright sunlight of eternal day?

“No chilling winds or poisonous breath
Can reach that blissful shore ;
There sin and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more.”

To you who have believed the record which God has given of His Son,—to you let me say, “Hold fast the beginning of your confidence.” Truth is mighty and will prevail, and let me add, it needs no man’s patronage, but he who rejects it does so at his peril. No man liveth to himself, and this is especially true of all who are enlightened by divine truth. The religion of Jesus is a companionable religion; it is not enough for a man to embrace the truth himself, he must disseminate it abroad; he is not only a receptacle of the light, he must also diffuse it to those around him. He must add to his faith fortitude, and that fortitude enables him to exclaim, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.” Or again, in the language of the Psalmist, “Come, praise the Lord with me, let us exalt his name to-

gether.” And the divine approval has been given to this social intercourse, for we read, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Malachi iii. 16, 17). In this age of formal religion, when the mass of professors are abandoned to speculation, and when the Word of God is so generally perverted, it becomes all who know and love God’s Word to openly confess it.

“Whosoever,” says Jesus, “shall be ashamed of me and of my words, . . . of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark viii. 38). From this we see the importance of openly avowing the *words and doctrine* of Christ. Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom. i. 16). And why should any man be ashamed of such a gospel? A gospel which is “the power of God unto salvation to every

one that believeth" is a glorious gospel. Let us cling to it and cherish it as the bulwark of our faith and hope. Christ says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. . . . For without me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 4, 5). And John says, in his second epistle, 8th and 9th verses, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." Could language stronger and more forcible than these words of the apostle be used to set forth the importance, yea, the absolute *necessity* of receiving the doctrine of Christ and abiding in it? It is hardly possible to realize the grandeur of your position as believers, and the importance of the work assigned you,—both to work out your own salvation in the way indicated, and also to bear testimony for Jesus by witnessing for the truth.

Christianity, or the religion of Jesus, di-

vested of the false and superstitious dogmas which human tradition has added on to it, is a grand and ennobling subject for human study and reflection. Giving strength to the intellect, purifying, elevating, and refining the sentiments, it presents the Deity to us in the most attractive, tender, and endearing view as a compassionate, loving Father who has a Father's interest in His children and a Father's concern for their welfare and happiness. His is not the blind impulse of a weak, ignorant, earthly parent, but a clear-sighted, comprehensive purpose, such as might reasonably be expected in a God who is supremely good. His mind alone can fathom the wants of the human heart, and comprehend with unerring accuracy, because seeing with unobscured vision capable of declaring the end from the beginning. Such is the Being revealed to us in the Bible, and although our weak finite minds cannot grasp the infinite Being, still we see so much of the wonders and varieties of His creative power to deeply impress us with a sense of His greatness; and through His infinite goodness and condescension He has made known to us, in His written Word, enough of His

character, His designs and purposes, to inspire us with filial trust and confidence in the full accomplishment of all His promises, which promises not only concern "the life that now is," but also extend far beyond the present order of things into "the dispensation of the fulness of times," when every opposing influence will, ultimately, be subdued, the incorrigible destroyed, and peace, truth, and goodness shall dwell in every heart.

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