

The Only Atoning Priest-C H Spurgeon - Hebrews 10:11-14

The Only Atoning Priest

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, February 4th, 1872, by Charles Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever, those who are being sanctified." Hebrews 10:11-14

We shall have this morning to repeat a truth which has sounded forth from this pulpit many hundreds of times; but we shall offer no apology for our repetitions, seeing that the truth to be preached is one which cannot too often be proclaimed. If you lift up your eyes at night to the stars, what a wonderful variety of celestial scenery is there! The astronomer can turn his telescope first to one quarter of the heavens, and then to another, and find an endless change in the sublimities which meet his gaze.

Such are the doctrines of the gospel; they are full of variety, and beauty, and glory. But yet in the heavens one or two conspicuous constellations are more often regarded by the human eye than all the rest put together. The mariner looks for the Great Bear and the pole star; or, if he should cross the equator, he gazes on the southern cross. Though these stars have been often looked upon, it is never thought to be superfluous that practical men should still observe them. Night by night they have their watchers; for by them ten thousand sails are steered.

I should suppose that in those days, now happily past, when slavery reigned in the Southern States of America, the Negro if he desired liberty for his boy would be sure, whatever else of the stars he did not teach him, to point out to him the star of liberty. "Know well, my child, those friendly stars which point to the lone star of liberty. Follow that light until it leads you to a land where fetters no longer clank on human limbs."

Even so it seems to me that certain doctrines, and especially the doctrines of atonement and justification by faith, are like these guiding stars; and we ought frequently to point them out, make sure that our children know them, and that all who listen to us, whatever else they may be mistaken about, are clear about these--the guides of men to the haven of freedom and eternal rest. I believe if I should preach to you the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ every Sabbath-day, and that twice, and nothing else, my ministry would not be unprofitable, perhaps it might be more profitable than it is; so we are coming to the same truth which we handled last Sabbath evening. Many dishes are put upon the table at intervals, but bread and salt are always placed there; and so we will have the atonement again, and again, and again; for this is the bread and salt of the gospel feast.

I purpose, this morning, to handle the text thus.

First, we will read, mark, and learn it;

secondly, we will ask God's grace that we may inwardly digest it.

I. Come, then, first of all to the reading, marking, and learning of it; and you will observe that in it there are three things very clearly stated.

The atoning sacrifice of Jesus, our great High Priest, is set forth: first by way of contrast; then its character is described; then its consequences are mentioned. Briefly upon each.

First, it is set forth by way of contrast--contrast with that ancient dispensation which was of divine origin, which conveyed much blessing to Israel, and which had the divine approval resting upon it.

In that old dispensation, the first point mentioned in the text is, that there were many priests. "For every priest stands"--implying that there were several. There were many priests at the same time--the sacrifices of the temple were too numerous to have been all of them performed by one man. All the descendants of Aaron were set apart to this work, and even then they required the aid of the Levites in certain inferior duties. And as there were many priests at one time, so there were many in succession. As a priest died, he was succeeded by his sons. By reason of infirmity, they were not able to continue in their office even through the whole of their lifetime; there was a certain period at which they were commanded to surrender their office to younger men. By reason of mortality

the priesthood was perpetually changing; one high priest died, and was succeeded by another.

Now the reason for the existence of many priests was this, that no one priest had accomplished the work of expiation. The good man has gone to his fathers and offered up the last of the morning lambs--but the morning lambs must still be offered. The high priest is dead, and there shall be no more opportunity for him to enter into that which is within the veil, but there must be a new high priest appointed, for the work is not finished. There were many priests, and as one generation passed away, another inherited the mitre.

Now, herein is the glory of Christ that he is but one, and to this our attention is called by the apostle; that whereas there were many priests, and the sacrifices were hereby proved to be incomplete, since others had to take up the work. Here is but one priest forever, and he has finished his work, and therefore sits down at the right hand of God.

In further contrast, we observe that as there were many priests, so there were many sacrifices for sins. The sacrifice was offered once, but sin was not put away, and therefore had to be offered again. The great day of atonement came every year, wherein sin was afresh brought to remembrance. There was a day of atonement last year, but the people are unforgiven, and there must be a day of atonement this year; and when that day is over and the priest has come forth in his holy and beautiful apparel, with the breastplate gleaming in the light of God, Israel may rejoice for awhile, but there is one thought that will sadden her: there must be an atonement day next year, for sin still remains upon Israel, notwithstanding all that the house of Aaron can do by all their sacrifices.

Yes, and moreover, remembrance of sin was of necessity made every day. There was the lamb for the morning, the innocent victim was slaughtered and burned; but the morning sacrifice did not put away the day's sin, for as the sun began to descend in the west another victim must be brought, and so on each morning and each night: victim, victim, victim, sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice, because the expiation was always incomplete.

But our blessed Lord, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," was sacrificed but once, and that one sacrifice has completed his expiatory work. In every truth, his was a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than theirs.

Follow the contrast a little further, and observe the Apostle's assertion that the repeated sacrifices of the law could never take away sin. Those must have been strangely blind, who thought they could. How could the blood of bulls and of goats put away sin? What conceivable connection can there be, except in symbol, between the death pangs of a beast, and the sin of a man before God? The principle of substitution was by the legal sacrifices clearly set forth, but that was all; those offerings did not and could not provide the actual substitute. The principle of vicarious sacrifice they plainly unfolded, but they provided no real sin-offering. How could they? Where but in the Christ of God, could a sin-atoning sacrifice be found? Where else is there one who could in our nature, make recompense to the injured law of God?

You will observe, dear brethren, that the words used in the text are these, "Can never take away sin." The word is, "Can never strip off sin." As if our sins were like filthy garments--the vestures of our disgrace--these could not be taken from us by the daily ministering of priests. There was no power in their sacrifices to remove the polluted coverings. Yet the priests were very diligent, for "every priest stands" in the posture of activity, and they were persevering too, for "every priest stands daily."

They were obedient too, for they did not offer sacrifices according to their own devices, But as the text says, "the same sacrifices"--that is to say, such as were ordained by God. The priests were both diligent, constant, and obedient, and the principle of the truth was in their offerings--namely, the doctrine of substitution; yet sin still remained upon the consciences of the offerers, and none of them were made perfect.

Mark well one inference from this. If the sacrifices which were presented reverently and perpetually, according to God's own command, and were presented by men about whose priesthood there could be no question--for they had received it indisputably of the Lord--if these offerings were of no service to the taking away of sin, then it is clear enough that the offerings of so-called priests in these modern times cannot have any efficacy. Here is a priesthood, certainly appointed by God, offering victims ordained by divine order, and yet their service does not put away sin.

How much less, then, can it be wise to trust in doubtful priests, who present sacrifices unwarranted by the Word of God. Their descent cannot be proved, their title is a forgery, their pretensions of one sect are ridiculed by another, they are all alike deceivers. Be done with them and rest alone in Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession.

If Jerusalem has no sacrifice in all her flocks, what use can it be to look to Rome? If Aaron's seed cannot put away sin, to what end shall we look to the shavelings of Antichrist?

Following the apostle's words, we come to the character of our Lord's sacrifice, and we perceive, in reading, that his priesthood was personal, and entirely within himself. There is but one true sin-atoning priest. The twelfth verse says, "this man." The word "man" is not in the original; it is "this," "this priest," if you will; "this man," if you please; but its vagueness may make us think that the apostle

scarcely knew what to say.

You see the stars and the moon in their brightness, but suddenly they are all eclipsed and lost in a superior light. What can this glory be, which has paled their fires? It is the sun rising in his strength. So, while we are beholding the priesthood of Aaron with all its excellence, it suddenly ceases to shine, because of the glory which excels--the radiant presence of one, for whom, like Heaven's manna, it is not easy to find one fully descriptive name.

Shall we call him "man"? Blessed be his name; he is so, our near kinsman, the "Son of Man."

Shall we call him "priest"? He is so. Blessed be his name; he is the true Melchizedek.

Shall we call him "God"? Well may we do so, for he counts it not robbery to be equal with God.

But this one divinely mysterious person--this unique and solitary high-priest, accomplishes what the many priests of Aaron's race could never accomplish. They were weak--but he is all-sufficient. He has wrought out eternal redemption, and made an end of sin.

Note well, that none stand with him at the altar; none is appointed to aid him, neither before him nor after him, is there one to share his office. He is without father, without mother, without predecessor, and without successor. He stands alone and by himself, this glorious one who looked and there was no man, and therefore his own arm brought salvation; he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him. Jesus, the sole sacrificing priest of our profession, has completed what the long line of the Levitical priesthood must have left forever incomplete.

And we are told farther, by the apostle, that as there was but one priest, so there was only one sacrifice. He "offered one sacrifice for sins."

He himself was the sacrifice.

His body was the altar.

He himself was the priest.

He himself also was the victim.

On Calvary's tree, he presented himself a substitute for human guilt, and there he bore the crushing weight of Jehovah's wrath in his own body, on the behalf of all his people. On him their sins were laid, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and there he, in their stead, suffered what was due to the righteousness of God, and made atonement to divine justice for the sins of his people! This was done, not by many offerings, but by one sacrifice, and that one alone. Jesus offered no other sacrifice. He had never made one before, nor since, nor will he present another sacrifice in the future. His sin-offering is one.

The text adds further that, as there was but one sacrifice, so it was but once offered forever, or, as the tenth verse puts it, "Once for all." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." There is in the Scriptures no such idea as that of Christ perpetually offering himself; it is a childish invention of superstition. We are expressly told that he offered himself "once." Under the law, the lamb was offered many times, the same sacrifices were repeated. But our Lord exclaimed, "It is finished!" and concluded all his sacrificing works. He "offered one sacrifice for sins forever."

I do not know how your Bibles happen to be marked as to the comma in the passage. Mine, now before me, reads thus: "After he had offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down;" but that which I use at home is marked in the other way, "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down." We do not quite know where the comma should be; some of the best scholars maintain that it should be joined to the preceding words, others that it belongs to the following. It does not involve any point of doctrine; and it may be read whichever way you please, without error. I think, however, the preponderating testimony is in favor of its being read, "he offered one sacrifice for sins forever;" at any rate those words express a great and precious truth.

Look back as far as you can, there was no sacrifice for sins, except the "lamb slain from before the foundation of the world;" look on as far as you will, until this present dispensation shall have completed its circle, and men shall have passed the judgment-seat, and you shall find no atonement for sin except this one--it stands alone, shining as a lone star, or a solitary rock in the midst of a raging sea.

The sin-atoning sacrifice which God has set forth was and ever must be one. The Lord Jesus offered himself once, once only, once only forever! There is no other atoning priest, no other sacrifice, and there is no repetition of that one sacrifice.

Now we go on to notice the results of Christ's one offering, which are, in the text, described as threefold-- towards himself, towards his enemies, and towards his people.

Towards himself: After he had offered one sacrifice for sins he forever sat down at the right hand of God. Every priest, under the old dispensation, stood; but this man sat down, and the posture is very instructive. The typical priests stood, because there was work to do; still must they present their sacrifices; but our Lord sits down because there is no more sacrificial work to do; atonement is

complete, he has finished his task.

There were no seats in the tabernacle. Observe the Levitical descriptions and you will see that there were no resting-places for the priests in the holy place. Not only were none allowed to sit, but there was nothing whatever to sit upon. According to the rabbis, the king might sit in the holy places, and, perhaps, David did sit there; if so, he was a striking type of Christ sitting as king.

A priest never sat in the tabernacle, he was under a dispensation which did not afford rest, and was not intended to give it--a covenant of works which gives the soul no repose. Jesus sits in the holy of holies, and herein we see that his work is finished.

There is more teaching in the passage. He "sat down;" this shows that he took possession of the holy place. Under the law, when the priest had done his work, what did he do? He went home. Neither the temple nor the tabernacle was his home. If you had asked a priest, "Where do you dwell?" he would have said, "among the tribe of Levi yonder I have my abode." But this man, when he had finished his work, sat down in the holy place, because he was at home, not a servant only but a son--yes, and Lord of the whole house; and, therefore, he took his own seat therein by right. It is a joyful truth that he did this representatively, to show us that while the law gave no permanent possession, and could not establish the seed of Israel in possession of sacred privileges--the gospel gives us an abiding place among the children of God, who dwell in his house forever.

The apostle tells us where this seat of Christ was. He says, he "sat down at the right hand of God." This indicates the highest glory possible; our poet calls it, "The highest place that Heaven affords."

There was no nobler position, or Jesus would have had it. Note the remark of this same apostle in the first chapter of this epistle: "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, sit at my right hand?" Angels do not sit at the right hand of God; they are constantly in the place of service, and therefore they stand ready to fly on their Master's commands; but Jesus sits in the highest seat as Lord over his own house, clothed with honor and dignity, enthroned in the place of favor at the right hand of God. Sitting there, he is to be viewed as clothed with everlasting power, "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Exalted to be a Prince and a Savior to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins;" no more the "despised and rejected one, the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" no more in weakness and dishonor taken out to die; he sits as a king upon his throne, distributing royal bounties, coequal with Jehovah himself. As King of kings, Jesus Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father. So much with regard to the result of the Redeemer's passion in reference to himself.

Now, observe carefully the result of his offering with regard to his enemies. He sits there "waiting until they be made his footstool." They are crushed already; sin which is the sting of death has been removed, and the law which was the strength of sin has been satisfied. Sin being put away by Christ's death, he has effectually broken the jaw-teeth of all his enemies. When Jesus Christ offered himself unto God he fulfilled that ancient promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head!" Christ has set his foot upon the old dragon's head, and crushed out his power. Still, however, a feeble fight is kept up; feeble, I say, for so it is to Christ, though to us it seems vigorous. Sin and Satan within us, and all Christ's enemies outside us, including death itself, are vainly raging against the Christ of God, for every day they are being put beneath his feet; every day as the battle rages, the victory turns unto the enthroned Christ. In us, I trust sin has been put beneath Christ's feet; in thousands of others, it shall yet be so. Jesus upon the throne expects the growth of that victory until all his enemies shall be utterly and ignominiously beaten. "O long expected day, begin!" Father, fulfill your Son's expectations, for your saints expect it in him. Let the time come, when every enemy shall be beneath his feet.

We will not tarry, however, on that, but close this exposition of the words of the text by noticing the effect of Christ's death upon his own people. We are informed that he has "perfected" them. What a glorious word! Those for whom Christ has died, were perfected by his death. It does not mean that he made them perfect in character, so that they are no longer sinners, but that he made those for whom he died, perfectly free from the guilt of sin. When Christ took their sins upon himself, sin remained no longer upon them, for it could not be in two places at one and the same time; if it was on Christ, then it was not upon them; they were acquitted at the bar of God when Christ was, on their behalf, "numbered with the transgressors."

When Jesus suffered the penalty due to his people's sins to the last jot and tittle, then their sins ceased to be, and the covenant was fulfilled: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more forever." There was a clean sweep made of sin: "He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin;" and that for all his people. They need no other washing, no further purging, as far as pardon of sin and acceptance with God in the matter of justification are concerned, for they are all perfected by his sacrifice.

His people are described in the text as "those who are sanctified," and you must beware of misunderstanding that word as though it meant those who are made perfectly holy in character. The word implies an inward work of grace, but it means a great deal more. The passage should be read "He has perfected forever, those who are being sanctified," for it is in the present in the Greek. The text is not to be made to say that those who are perfectly sanctified are perfected, that would be a common-place, self-evident truth; but the great high priest perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Now, sanctification means, primarily, the setting apart of a people by God to be holy to himself. Election is sanctification virtually; all God's people were sanctified--set apart and made holy to the Lord--in the eternal purpose and sovereign decree or ever the earth was. Christ has by his death perfected all who were sanctified, or set apart in election. This purpose of sanctification is carried out further when those set apart are called out by grace. When effectual grace separates men from the world by conversion and regeneration, then they become, in another sense, the sanctified; they are set apart even as Christ set apart himself, dedicated to God's service, and separated from sinners. As the work which began at regeneration is continued and carried on in them, they are in another aspect sanctified; they are realizing in themselves that sanctification or dedication to God, which was theirs from before the foundation of the world. The text relates not only to those in Heaven who are perfectly sanctified, but it relates to all who were set apart in the purposes of grace, that as far as their pardon and justification are concerned, Christ perfected them forever when he offered up himself without spot unto God.

II. We have thus studied the interpretation of the words, reading, marking, and learning them.

Now, I ask your earnest attention while we try to digest these truths. It is in the digestion that the real nutriment shall come to our hearts.

All you who desire eternal life lend me your ears, for this matter concerns you. Observe that the whole business of this passage concerns sinners. The verse speaks about the Jewish priests who offered sacrifices for sins, and then it further speaks concerning Christ Jesus who has put away sin. O you guilty ones, the gospel is meant for you. If there be any of you who are innocent and pure, and without spot, for you I have no words of consolation. But oh, you sinners, the gospel is for you, for you the priesthood and the substitution of Jesus, for you his death on earth, for you his reign and power in Heaven. This fact ought to encourage every trembling conscience. Are any of you saying, "Ah, I shall never be saved, I am so guilty"? Believe not that lie of Satan. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are lost." The gospel has for its special aim and intent the putting away of sin, and therefore it is suitable to your case.

Hearken then further to me. See in the text the position out of which you should labor to escape. It is the position of those who stand daily ministering and daily offering sacrifices, which can never put away sin. You are seeking mercy and I know what you are doing; you are going about to establish a righteousness of your own. You thought, "I will pray very regularly,"--you have done so for months, but prayers can never put away sin. What is there in prayer itself that can have merit in it to make atonement for sin? You have read the Scriptures regularly, for which I am most glad, but this you always ought to have done, and if you now do it most commendably, in what way will that put away sin? "Ah, but I have been a regular attendant at a place of worship." It is well you should, for "faith comes by hearing." But I see no connection between the mere fact of your sitting in a place of worship and the putting away of sin; you know it has not eased your conscience yet, but has even increased your sense of sin.

Perhaps some of you have for years been trying to save yourselves, and you have got no further; you feel as if you were further off than ever you were. "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which profits not?" Why do you stand daily at the altar offering that which can never put away sin? It would be infinitely wiser to flee to the sacrifice which alone can atone.

Now, follow on the text, and, oh, may it come into your very soul, for its practical teaching is that the one sole object of faith for the pardon of sin, is the man, the priest, Christ Jesus. "This man," says the Apostle, "offered one sacrifice for sins forever." If you would have peace of heart, you must get it only from this one glorious person, the Christ of God. I tell you solemnly, you will damn yourself by your prayers, and your tears, and your repentings, and your church goings, and your chapel goings--as surely as by blasphemy and fornication, if you trust in them. For if you make a Savior and an idol of your best works, they are accursed. Though your idol be of purest gold, it is as much an abomination unto the living God as if you had made it of filth. There must be no looking anywhere but to Jesus, not in any measure or degree. He who looks partly to Jesus, and partly to himself, looks not to Christ at all. If a man shall put one foot upon the land and the other on the sea--the foot that is on the land will not avail him, he must certainly fall, because his other standing place is weak. If a chain is made strong enough to bear huge weights in every portion except one link--yet as we all know its strength is not to be measured by the stronger portions, but by the weak link; and if you have one weak link in your hope, if you are resting in anything you are, or hope to be, or can do or feel, that one weak link will snap and ruin you forever!

*"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."*

From top to bottom, from foundation to pinnacle, our hopes must be in the work of Jesus, and we must trust in him alone, or else we shall build in vain. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid." Other hope beneath the skies there is none. O soul, learn the uselessness of looking to anything but Christ. But be assured of this: if you will look to him, and to him alone, he will put away your sin, nay, he has done it by the sacrifice of himself.

Furthermore, here is another thought--I would that you would drink it in as Gideon's fleece drank in the dew--it is this: the efficacy of

the atonement of Christ for sin is as great today as ever it was. He "offered one sacrifice for sins," for what? for a thousand years? No! But the text says "forever!"--for ever!

*"The dying thief rejoiced to see,
That fountain in his day,
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.*

*Dear dying Lamb, your precious blood,
Shall never lose its power;
Until all the ransomed church Of God,
Be saved to sin no more."*

"One sacrifice for sins forever!" The devil tells you it is of no use for you to believe in Christ, there is not efficacy for you, you have sinned away your day of grace. Tell him he is a liar--Christ has offered one sacrifice for sins for ever; and while a man lives beneath the covenant of mercy, where the gospel is sounded in his ears, there is efficacy in the atonement forever. The atoning sacrifice has no limit in its merit, the salvation of some has not drained it of even the smallest degree of its power.

As the sunlight, though it is seen by millions of eyes, is as bright as ever it was, so is it with Jesus. Perhaps the sun's fires may grow dull, and become dimmed in the course of ages, but it is certain that the eternal fount of mercy, the Sun of Righteousness, will never fail. He will continue to flood his people with the golden sunlight of his forgiving grace. He has made one sacrifice for sins for ever. I will come to him then. He is able to save me--he is able to save me even though I were a sinner of seventy years of age. I will come to him, I will rest in him--in him alone. Oh, believe me, if you do this, then you have eternal life abiding in you.

A further thought. The text leads me to say to you that it is utterly hopeless, if you desire salvation, for you to expect Jesus Christ to do anything more than he has already done. Many are waiting for a something, and they scarce know what.

Now Jesus, when he died and went to Heaven, perfected forever all his work; and if you do not believe today in what he has done, there will be no surer grounds for belief tomorrow. If faith be difficult to me today, I must not expect that I shall have any more evidence, or that there will be any more truth for me to rely upon, if I live another twenty years. God has set forth Christ for you as guilty sinners to rest on; and if that is not enough for you, what more would you have? Christ has offered himself, and died and suffered in our stead, and gone into his glory; and, if you cannot depend upon him, what more would you have him do? Shall he come and die again? You have rejected him once; you would reject him even, though he died twice. But that cannot be done; there is enough in his sacrifice to answer all the purposes of mercy, and if you sin willfully by rejecting him, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation."

This is the point: all the atonement that could save me in ten years' time is here now; all that I can ever rely upon if I postpone all thoughts of faith, all is here already. There will be no improvement in Christ. He has perfected his work. Oh, poor troubled soul, rest you on him now. While I put these words, as it were, into your mouths, how I wish I could put them into your hearts! How foolish you are who are looking for signs and wonders or else you will not believe. May the Spirit of God show you that Jesus is now able and willing to save you, and that all you have to do is to take what he has done, and simply trust him, and you shall be saved this morning, completely saved, perfected through his one sacrifice. There remains no more to be done by the Redeemer. He sits down, and he will not rise for any further sacrifice. He has finished his atonement and perfected those he means to save; and if you believe not in him, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.

Yet, again, I want you, dearly beloved brethren, to gather from the text before us the true posture of every believer in Christ. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down." If I am a believer that is my posture, if you are a believer that is yours, you are to sit down. Under the law there was no sitting down. Even at the Passover the Israelites stood with their loins girt and their staves in their hands. There was no sitting down. It is only at the gospel supper that our proper posture is that of recumbency, reclining, or sitting down, because our warfare is accomplished. They that have believed have entered into rest. Jesus has given us rest, we are not traversing the wilderness, we are come unto mount Zion, unto the glorious assembly of the church of the first born whose names are written in Heaven. Our justifying work is finished, finished by Christ. Sit down Christian, sit down and rest in your Lord. There is much to be done as to fighting your sins, much to be done for Christ in the world; but so far as justification and forgiveness are concerned, rest is your proper place, peace in Christ Jesus your lawful portion.

Your position is also to be one of expectancy. Christ, when he sits down, expects his enemies to be made his footstool. Expect, O believer, the time when you shall be rid of all sin. Fight manfully against your inbred corruptions, struggle against sin as you see it in the outside world, and expect every day with holy faith that you shall get the victory. As Christ sits there expecting, he has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in himself; and we will sit there and look down upon this erring world, and expect the time when all evil shall be beneath our feet as it is beneath his.

Meanwhile, our posture is, once again, that of those who are perfected in Christ Jesus. How I wish that we could all realize this, and live in the power of it. If I am, indeed, a believer, I have nothing whatever to do in order to put away the guilt of my sins. I have much to do by faith to overcome the power of sin in me, and to seek after holiness; but so far as the guilt of transgression is concerned, Jesus Christ's one offering has perfected all his people, there is not a sin remaining upon them, nor a trace of sin! They are "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" before God's sight they are perfectly lovely; they are not somewhat beautiful, but they are altogether lovely in Christ; they are accepted not in part, but altogether "accepted in the Beloved."

When I get upon this strain, words are quite inadequate to express the emotions of my soul. This truth might well make David dance before the ark of the Lord--to think that though black in ourselves, we are lovely in Christ; though like the smoke-dried tents of Kedar we are foul--yet clothed in our Savior's beauties we are like the curtains of Solomon for glory. The glory of the text is that we are perfected forever; not for tomorrow, and then suffered to fall from grace; not for the next twenty years, and then turned out of the covenant; but he has perfected "forever" those that are set apart. It is a work which abides like the worker himself, and while Christ sits on the throne his people cannot die; while his work remains forever perfect, they are also forever perfect in him.

Now, brethren, another practical point is this, that it befits us to make the evidence of our interest in this gracious work more and more clear to others. The text says, "Has perfected those who are sanctified," or set apart as holy unto God. We must be more and more set apart every day, we must labor after holiness; this must be our object, not in order that we may be saved, for we are saved already, but in order that by others it may be clearly seen that we are saved, and they seeing our good works may glorify our Father in Heaven. If I have in myself no measure of holiness, how shall I be recognized as belonging to Christ? Is it not foolish presumption to say "I am perfect in Christ," if still my soul lives in sin, and loves it? May the Lord, by his Spirit, lead us in the ways of holiness, and then, walking in the light as he is in the light, we shall have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son shall cleanse us from all sin!

Finally, brethren, it remains for us to recollect that Christ will be one of two things to every one of us here present: either we shall see him at the right hand of God and rejoice that he is lifted so high--or else we shall behold him there with horror as we writhe beneath his feet. For his people, perfected forever, it is their Heaven to think that Christ is highly exalted. Oh, would we not exalt him if we could! Is there anything in this world that we would keep back from him? Is there any suffering from which we would shrink, if we could lift him high? I hope I can speak for all of God's people and say, the dearest object of our life is to honor him. Oh for high thrones for Jesus and bright crowns for Jesus!

"Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head to death!
And be his honors sounded high
By all things that have breath!"

Let him have the highest place that Heaven can yield him!

But if we will not believe his Godhead, if we will not trust him as the Mediator, if we have no part in his sacrifice, if we oppose his gospel, if we reject his claims to our obedience, there is another position we shall have to take up, and that is, beneath his feet. Those feet will be heavy indeed! They were pierced once; but if ever those pierced feet come upon you, they will crush you to powder. Nothing is so terrible as love when once it is turned to anger. Oil is soft, but how it burns. Inflammation love into jealousy and it is cruel as the grave. Beware, you who reject the Savior, for in the day when he comes he will smite you with a rod of iron, and even his face, which is full of tenderness today, shall then be full of terror, and this shall be your cry, "Hide us you mountains, you rocks conceal us, from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." What a wonderful mixture of words, "The wrath of the Lamb!" It is one of the most dreadful expressions in Scripture. The Lord grant we may never feel its terrible meaning. May his blood cleanse us. Amen.