

THE  
**PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.**

VOL. IV.

PITTSBURGH, JULY, 1835.

No. 2.

**SERMON XLVIII.**

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**ON THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.**

**MATT. 20:28**—*Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

THE coming into the world of God's "only begotten and beloved Son" must have had an important object. It took place four thousand years after the creation. It had been the subject of many promises and prophecies—it had been fore-shadowed by many types and figures—and it had excited long and anxious expectations before the "fulness of the time" came. Not, however, more than its importance demanded. And now, the time having arrived, he did come, and found good old Simeon waiting for him, the second temple standing in its glory, the daily sacrifice still smoking on the altar, the sceptre of Judah just passing into Roman hands, and John the Baptist ready to receive him, set him apart to his offices, and introduce him to Israel as the Messiah. He was then "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," announced and hailed by angels, and honored by "wise men from the East" who had seen his star, and were conducted by it to the place where he lay.

The object of all this he himself declares in the text. He "came not to be ministered unto." His appearance was not splendid and glorious. He was not born in a palace, but in a stable. He was not pillowed on down beneath a canopy of state, but on straw, in a manger. He did not appear amid the splendors of royalty, but in the lowliness of earthly poverty, and in the feebleness of helpless infancy. This was, because he came to "minister" to the necessities of his own creatures. He therefore "took on him the form of a servant" when he "was found in fashion as a man." Hence we have his life of toil in ministering to the instruction and comfort of ignorant and miserable men, for he "went about doing good," as if that was his whole object. However many came to him, he never turned one empty away. However wearied, he never refused to minister. Though "Lord of all" he became "servant of all."

But the great object of his mission remained yet to be performed: "He came—to give his life a ransom for many." "A ransom" is a price paid for the release of one who has forfeited or lost his liberty. He is either too weak to break his chains, or too poor to pay his ransom, and a friend redeems him, and sets him free. This was the condition of our race. Our

## SERMON XLIX.

### WHO SHALL DWELL IN HEAVEN?

BY C. C. CUYLER, D. D.

PSALM 24:3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?*

#### MY DEAR HEARERS:

You can have no doubt that in the course of a few years you will have terminated your earthly course, and be added to the great congregation of the dead. This truth is clearly taught in the scriptures, and is fully confirmed to us by daily observation. Human life is often terminated suddenly; still oftener, unexpectedly; and pains and sicknesses are its ordinary premonitions. You also probably acknowledge the immortality of the soul, in conscious existence; and consequently must be persuaded that such existence must be one of happiness or misery. This also is clearly taught in the scriptures, for they assure us of a judgment to come, from which the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The differences between these states is immeasurable—inconceivable. The day which ends your life on earth, will seal up your destiny for one or other of these states—"For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

All uncertainty with respect to the result should fill us with great anxiety; and it would, if seriously considered. Matters of temporary moment, and of small importance, often do so. And yet, with respect to this subject, multitudes, who have neither assurance nor well-founded hope of eternal happiness, are as careless as if they had a guaranty from God for the enjoyment of "eternal life." It seems to be taken for granted by them, without evidence, that they shall enter into heaven when they die; and this they make a sufficient warrant for the dismissal of all anxiety, and the neglect of all serious inquiry. This seems also to be almost the only subject they treat in this manner. The hope or possession of even a small earthly estate leaves them no rest till they have investigated and secured its title—while uncertainty with respect to the soul's eternal welfare scarcely moves a thought, or excites a fear in their minds. Multitudes manifest this inconsistency in yielding to every earthly influence, however trifling, and yet showing no sensibility when the eternal interests of their souls are in question. The fact that insensibility is so general, makes it the more dangerous.

You, my dear reader, may be under its influence, and your welfare requires that you should be awakened from such a delusion, ere God say to you, "Sleep on now." Permit then a friend to deal plainly and affectionately with you. Your wish is, to spend a happy eternity, and you have some expectation, no matter from what source it may be derived, that your wish shall be realized. Is not your want of feeling and anxiety a proof that you have never given the subject much thought or reflection? that you have taken for granted what you would find it impossible to prove? You say, you hope to enter heaven when you die—What is the ground of your hope of admission there? Have you ever asked yourself the questions—By what title shall I enter upon the inheritance? What shall be the ground of my claim? What are my qualifications for its enjoyment? Such an inheritance should be secured by a strong title—not a shadow of doubt should hang over it.

We have no natural claims to this inheritance; nor have we any natural fitness for its enjoyments. These have all been forfeited by transgression, and lost by sin. The law of God shuts out every sinner—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This necessarily excludes all the guilty. They cannot be adjudged to eternal life. The law of the kingdom of heaven is explicit on this point. But you may tell me, my hope rests on another foundation. I look to the provision made by Christ. There is forgiveness with the Lord. You are right. The provision is ample. It has never failed when applied. God has made it, and he will honor it. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered." Pardon and justification will insure heaven. This is according to the *will* of the testator. The inheritance runs in this line, and it is sure to all the children. The Holy One of Israel will never deny his word.

But how does this affect you? What bearing has it on your case? The question is not, whether justified sinners shall enter heaven—That is an adjudged case. But are *you* justified? Have you had *your* pardon sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, so as to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the point to be inquired into, and here we must make no mistakes. Pardons are not issued indiscriminately. Sinners are not justified as a matter of course. God is no doubt a sovereign in the pardon of sinners. Sinners are not pardoned because they are worthy of such a distinction. Yet was the rebel ever forgiven till he mourned over his sins, with a godly sorrow? till sin was so embittered to him that he could no longer live in it? till, oppressed as with a heavy burden, which he could no longer bear, and of which he could not rid himself, he cried with the publican, smiting upon his breast, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Have *you*, in a spirit of deep humiliation, and with fervent prayer, sought the divine forgiveness, and been enabled to hope that you have found it? And as an evidence that you have not deceived yourself with a *vain hope*, has sin ever since been embittered to you, so that you could not live in its practice, and have you, from a sense of obligation, as well as inclination, been endeavoring to do the will of God?

How, upon examination, do you find it? Is the prospect dark? Are you destitute of evidence? Upon what then do you found your hope of heaven? This is the way, the *only* way, in which sinners can ever obtain admission there, without a subversion of the law and government of God: He has given his only begotten Son to die as an atoning sacrifice, that he might be just in justifying every one that believeth—Christ must be received and appropriated. It seems then that all the claims of God's violated law are in full force against you. That you are lying under its condemning power. That you are justly exposed to the wrath of God, and that you have only to die, to which you are every moment liable, to be lost for ever. Do not, I beseech you, turn away from this plain, scriptural view of your state. Do not suffer yourself to be deluded. Do not turn away from this faithful mirror, for that will not change your state, nor lessen your danger. Contemplate your state as it is, and suffer not yourself to believe that the danger is exaggerated. It cannot be. Language is incapable of doing it. Imagination cannot magnify the reality. Let your whole anxiety be to become experimentally acquainted with the forgiving love of God, for till justified, heaven must necessarily be shut against you.

Take another view of your case, in relation to which men are apt to deceive themselves. You think of going to heaven when you die. You think

it desirable to be there. Let me ask you, with affectionate simplicity, what you would do in heaven? In what way could heaven minister to your happiness as you are? My dear friend, the elements of happiness are not local—it depends much less upon *place* than men are apt to imagine. Place men where you please, if their hearts are not in unison with the scene, they could not be happy *there*. It would not gratify a man whose *whole head was sick, and whose whole heart was faint*, to sit down at a table covered with every species of food, substantial or delicate, which could gratify the palate of a healthy man. You would do no kindness to a person of a sad and heavy spirit to introduce him into the company of the light-hearted, trifling, and gay—nor would it promote the comfort of one of the latter class to be thrown into the society of the former.

We are essentially social beings, and no small part of our felicity depends upon the character of our associates. We choose them for the qualities which they possess, or are supposed to possess, in common with ourselves. In order to render their society agreeable to us, there must be a considerable measure of similarity of tastes, dispositions, sentiments, habits, or pursuits. When these are not well assorted, association produces unhappiness. So in order to constitute heaven a pleasant residence to us, we must drink into the very spirit of its inhabitants. We must be morally assimilated to them, or we can never be happy in their society, enjoyments, and employments. If we, therefore, desire to know whether a residence in heaven would make us happy; or in other words, whether we shall be admitted there, for no other will be admitted—we have only to ascertain the characters, enjoyments, and employments of its inhabitants, and our own similarity or dissimilarity to them, in order to know whether we shall be received. We need no better rule of judgment to determine the point in a correct manner. We may thus prove our own selves, and ascertain our own doom.

Who then are the inhabitants of heaven? Heaven is the presence-chamber of the great and glorious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There the Triune holds his court, displays his glory, and dispenses his richest bounties. There is the residence of his servants, the holy angels, who have kept their first estate. And there too dwell the redeemed descendants of Adam. All these are holy. They bear the same image. Their union and harmony are perfect. There is no discord, jarring, or strife. They are all of one heart and of one mind. The will of God is supreme, and the rest are all in unison with him, and with one another. All is love—"God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." The employments of heaven are all holy. They consist essentially, in loving, contemplating, admiring, praising and obeying God, and affectionate intercourse with each other on subjects of the highest interest. Can such society and such employments be other than happy? Every faculty, and thought, and feeling, of every individual are in harmony with each other, and with their fellows; and God approves and smiles. This is most delightful. Can any thing add to the enjoyment? Yes, one thought, one single thought. This society is never to be broken up. This harmony is never to be destroyed. "They go no more out." Nothing which is unclean shall ever enter there. What a gulf—what an impassable gulf is there, between this scene and the corruption and carnality of earth! Well might David ask, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" Christ has answered the question—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The apostle has declared the law of the kingdom—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

No unholy being can be admitted into this fellowship. If God ever should, in some unheard of way, by a singular dispensation, pardon the guilt of a sinner's transgression, and carry him into such society, and subject him to such employments, it neither would, nor could render him happy. How could it be otherwise? We know that sinners take no delight in reading or hearing the word of God on earth. How then could they have pleasure in beholding him of whose mind and perfections that word is only a faint shadow? They do not now love to meditate, even occasionally, on divine things. How then would they relish it to have them continually before their minds in all their perfection and glory? They have now no taste for divine ordinances. How then could they enjoy the God of ordinances? The high praises of God now grate on their ears. How then would they relish them in the perfection to which they have attained in heaven? The work of prayer is now irksome. How then could they take pleasure in holding more direct intercourse with God, the hearer of prayer? Here they are rebels against God's holy government. Their carnal hearts say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" How would they feel to stand continually in his presence, and be occupied in doing his will? Here they account it a drudgery—a very weariness, to spend even a few hours in the company of the truly pious, and witness their conversation and conduct. How would they bear it to be confined to such a society for ever? Here all their enjoyments are sensual. There they would have all their desires and appetites in vigorous exercise, but be for ever separated from every object of their gratification.—To such a creature, heaven would necessarily be a strange and uncomfortable place, because he has nothing in common with the inhabitants of heaven but bare existence, nor a single taste or disposition to which its enjoyments or employments could give agreeable exercise. This, sinners know, or *may* know, if they will only examine the subject with some little care and attention. They need not doubt whether they shall be received into heaven or not, if they die in their present state. They have only to ascertain in what companions, objects, employments, and enjoyments, they now take pleasure, to satisfy themselves, remaining as they are, where they shall spend their eternity. God will never mingle together discordant elements. Like will be associated with like.

And now, my dear reader, having laid before you some plain and highly important truths, which nearly concern your best interests, allow me to take with you the liberty of a friend.—Upon what ground do you stand? In the view of these truths, what is the prospect before you? What does your present state indicate? If you were *now* to die, where are you going? If you die as you *are*, where *must* you expect to spend your eternity? You seem to pause and hesitate. Have you not taken for granted what you cannot prove? Have you not been flattering yourself with a mere delusion of the imagination, and rested your hope on the idle wish of a deceived heart? Do you not clearly perceive that you must be essentially changed before you will be *permitted* to enter heaven; or *could* be happy there? The happiness of heaven is not local—It is founded on the perfections of God, and the conformity of his intelligent creatures to his moral image.—You need, and *must* have, a *new heart*. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Let this be the subject of your constant and serious meditation, your ardent desires, your anxious endeavor, your fervent prayer. Rest not till you have a divine assurance of an "inheritance among all them that are sanctified."