

CHRIST—OUR SUBSTITUTE

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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”
2 Corinthians 5:21.

SOME TIME ago an excellent lady sought an interview with me with the object, as she said, of enlisting my sympathy upon the question of “Anti-Capital Punishment.” I heard the excellent reasons she urged against hanging men who had committed murder, and though they did not convince me, I did not seek to answer them. She proposed that when a man committed murder he should be confined for life. My remark was, that a great many men who had been confined half their lives were not a bit the better for it and as for her belief that they would necessarily be brought to repentance, I was afraid it was but a dream.

“Ah,” she said, good soul as she was, “that is because we have been all wrong about punishments. We punish people because we think they deserve to be punished. Now we ought to show them,” said she, “that we love them. That we only punish them to make them better.” “Indeed, Madam,” I said, “I have heard that theory a great many times and I have seen much fine writing upon the matter but I am no believer in it. The design of punishment should be rehabilitation, but the ground of punishment lies in the positive guilt of the offender. I believe that when a man does wrong he ought to be punished for it and that there is a guilt in sin which justly merits punishment.”

“Oh no.” She could not see that. “Sin was a very wrong thing, but punishment was not a proper idea.” She thought that people were treated too cruelly in prison and that they ought to be taught that we love them. If they were treated kindly in prison and tenderly dealt with, they would grow so much better, she was sure. With a view of interpreting her own theory, I said, “I suppose, then, you would give criminals all sorts of indulgences in prison. Some great vagabond who has committed burglary dozens of times—I suppose you would let him sit in an easy chair in the evening before a nice fire and mix him a glass of spirits and water and give him his pipe and make him happy, to show him how much we love him.”

Well, no, she would not give him the spirits, but, still, all the rest would do him good. I thought that was a delightful picture, certainly. It seemed to me to be the most prolific method of cultivating rogues which ingenuity could invent. I imagine that you could grow any number of thieves in that way. For it would be a special means of propagating all manner of roguery and wickedness. These very delightful theories to such a simple mind as mine were the source of much amusement—the idea of appeasing villains and treating their crimes as if they were the tumbles and falls of children—made me laugh heartily.

I fancied I saw the government resigning its functions to these excellent persons and the grand results of their marvelously kind experiments. The sword of the magistrate transformed into a soup spoon and the jail a sweet retreat for injured reputations. Little however, did I think I should live to see this kind of stuff taught in pulpits. I doubt not that from it would come out a divinity which would bring down God’s moral government from the solemn aspect in which Scripture reveals it, to a namby-pamby sentimentalism, which adores a Deity destitute of every masculine virtue. But we never know today what may occur tomorrow.

We have lived to see a certain sort of men—thank God they are not Baptists—though I am sorry to say there are a great many Baptists who are beginning to follow in their trail—who seek to teach nowadays that God is a universal Father and that our ideas of His dealing with the impenitent as a Judge and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error. Sin, according to these men, is a disorder rather than an offense—an error rather than a crime. Love is the only attribute they can discern and the full-orbed Deity they have not known.

Some of these men push their way very far into the bogs and mire of falsehood, until they inform us that eternal punishment is ridiculed as a dream. In fact, books now appear which teach us that there is no such thing as the vicarious Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, They use the word Atonement, it is true, but in regard to its meaning, they have removed the ancient landmark. They acknowledge that the Father has shown His great love to poor sinful man by sending His Son, but not that God was inflexibly just in the exhibition of His mercy—not that He punished Christ on the behalf of His people—nor that, indeed, God ever will punish anybody in His wrath, or that there is such a thing as justice apart from discipline.

Even sin and Hell are but old words employed henceforth in a new and altered sense. Those are old-fashioned notions, and we poor souls who go on talking about election and imputed righteousness are belied by our time. Yes, and the gentlemen who bring out books on this subject applaud Mr. Maurice and Professor Scott and the like, but are too cowardly to follow them and boldly propound these sentiments. These are the new men whom God has sent down from Heaven, to tell us that the Apostle Paul was all wrong—that our faith is vain, that we have been quite mistaken—that there was no need for propitiating blood to wash away our sins. They tell us our sins needed discipline, but penal vengeance and righteous wrath are quite out of the question.

When I thus speak, I am free to confess that such ideas are not boldly taught by a certain individual whose volume excites these remarks, but as he puffs the books of gross perverters of the Truth of God, I am compelled to believe that he endorses such theology.

Well, Brethren, I am happy to say that sort of stuff has not gained entrance into this pulpit. I dare say the worms will eat the wood before there will be anything of that sort sounded in this place. And may these bones be picked by vultures and this desk be rent in sunder by lions and may every nerve in this body suffer pangs and tortures, before these lips shall give utterance to any such doctrines or sentiments. We are content to remain among the vulgar souls who believe the old Doctrines of Grace. We are willing still to be behind in the great march of intellect and stand by that unmoving Cross. Which, like the pole star, never advances, because it never stirs—but always abides in its place—the guide of the soul to Heaven. It is the one foundation other than which no man can lay and without building upon which, no man shall ever see the face of God and live.

Thus much have I said upon a matter which just now is exciting controversy. It has been my high privilege to be associated with six of our ablest Brethren in the ministry in a letter of protest against the countenance which a certain newspaper seemed willing to lend to this modern heresy. We trust it may be the means, in the hands of God, of helping to check that downward march—that wandering from which seems by some singular infatuation to have unsettled the minds of some Brethren in our denomination.

Now I come to address you upon the topic which is most continually assailed by those who preach “another Gospel” which is not another—but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the “Gospel of Christ,” namely, the doctrine of the substitution of Christ on our behalf—His actual atonement for our sins—and our positive and actual justification through His sufferings and righteousness.

It seems to me that until language can mean the very reverse of what it says—until by some strange logic God’s Word can be contradicted and can be made to belie itself—the doctrine of substitution can never be rooted out of the words which I have selected for my text, “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

First, then, the sinlessness of the Substitute. Secondly, the reality of the imputation of sin to Him. And thirdly, the glorious reality of the imputation of righteousness to us.

I. First, THE SINLESSNESS OF THE SUBSTITUTE. The doctrine of Holy Scripture is this, that inasmuch as man could not keep God’s Law—having fallen in Adam—Christ came and fulfilled the Law on the behalf of His people. And that inasmuch as man had already broken the Divine Law and incurred the penalty of the wrath of God, Christ came and *suffered* in the place of His elect ones, that so by His enduring the full vials of wrath, they might be emptied out and not a drop might ever fall upon the heads of His blood-bought people.

Now, you will readily perceive that if one is to be a substitute for another before God, either to work out a righteousness or to suffer a penalty, that substitute must himself be free from sin. If he has sin of his own, all that he can suffer will be but the due reward of his own iniquity. If he has *himself* transgressed, he cannot suffer for another, because

all his sufferings are already due on his own personal account. On the other hand, it is quite clear that none but a perfect man could ever work out a spotless righteousness for us and keep the Law in our place, for if he has dishonored the Commandment in his thought, there must be a corresponding flaw in his service.

If the warp and woof be speckled, how shall he bring forth the robe of milk-white purity and wrap it about our loins? He must be a spotless one who shall become the representative of his people, either to give them a passive or active righteousness—either to offer a satisfaction as the penalty of their sins, or a righteousness as the fulfillment of God's demand.

It is satisfactory for us to know and to believe beyond a doubt, that our Lord Jesus was without sin. Of course, in His Divine nature He could not know iniquity. And as for His human nature, it never knew the original taint of depravity. He was of the seed of the woman, but not of the tainted and infected seed of Adam. Overshadowed as was the Virgin by the Holy Spirit, no corruption entered into his nativity. That holy Thing which was born of her was neither conceived in sin nor shapen in iniquity. He was brought into this world immaculate. He was immaculately conceived and immaculately born. In Him that natural black blood which we have inherited from Adam never dwelt.

His heart was upright within Him. His soul was without any bias to evil—His imagination had never been darkened. He had no infatuated mind. There was no tendency whatever in Him but to do that which was good, holy and honorable. And as He did not share in the original depravity, so He did not share in the imputed sin of Adam which we have inherited—not, I mean, in Himself personally, though He took the consequences of that, as He stood as our representative. The sin of Adam had never passed over the head of the second Adam. All that were in the loins of Adam sinned in him when he touched the fruit.

But Jesus was not in the loins of Adam. Though He might be conceived of as being in the womb of the woman—"a new thing which the Lord created in the earth"—He lay not in Adam when he sinned and consequently no guilt from Adam, either of depravity of nature, or of distance from God, ever fell upon Jesus as the result of anything that Adam did. I mean upon Jesus as considered in Himself though He certainly took the sin of Adam as He was the representative of His people.

Again—as in His nature He was free from the corruption and condemnation of the sin of Adam, so also in His life no sin ever corrupted His way. His eyes never flashed with unhallowed anger. His lips never uttered a treacherous or deceitful word. His heart never harbored an evil imagination. Never did He wander after lust. No covetousness ever so much as glanced into His soul. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." From the beginning of His life to the end you cannot put your finger even upon a mistake, much less upon a willful error. So perfect was He, that no virtue seems to be greater than any other, or by an opposing quality give a bias to the scale of absolute righteousness.

John is distinguished for his love. Peter for his courage. But Jesus Christ is distinguished for neither one above another. Because He possesses all in such sublime unison, such heavenly harmony, that no one virtue stands out above the rest. He is meek, but He is courageous. He is loving, but He is decided. He is bold as a lion, yet He is quiet and peaceful as a lamb. He was like that fine flour which was offered before God in the burnt offering. A flour without grit, so smooth, that when you rubbed it, it was soft and pure—no particles could be discerned—so was His character fully ground, fully compounded.

There was not one feature in His moral countenance which had undue preponderance above the other. But He was replete in everything that was virtuous and good. Tempted He was, it is true, but sin He never did. The whirlwind came from the wilderness and smote upon the four corners of that house, but it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. The rains descended, Heaven afflicted Him. The winds blew, the mysterious agency of Hell assailed Him. The floods came, all earth was in arms against Him, but yet He stood firm in the midst of all. Never once did He even seem to bend before the tempest—but buffeting the fury of the blast, bearing all the temptations that could ever happen to man, which summed themselves up and consummated their fury on Him—He stood to the end—without a single flaw in His life, or a stain upon His spotless robe.

Let us rejoice, then, in this, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, that we have such a Substitute—One who is fit and proper to stand in our place and to suffer in our place, seeing He has no need to offer a sacrifice for Himself—no need to cry for Himself—"Father, I have sinned"—no need to bend the knee of the penitent and confess His own iniquities, for He is without spot or blemish, the perfect lamb of God's Passover.

I would have you carefully notice the particular expression of the text, for it struck me as being very beautiful and significant—“who knew no sin.” It does not merely say did none, but knew none. Sin was no acquaintance of His. He was acquainted with *grief*, but no acquaintance of *sin*. He had to walk in the midst of its most frequented haunts, but did not know it. Not that He was ignorant of its nature, or did not know its penalty, but He did not know it. He was a stranger to it, He never gave it the wink or nod of familiar recognition.

Of course He knew what sin was, for He was very God—but with sin He had no communion, no fellowship, no brotherhood. He was a perfect stranger in the presence of sin. He was a foreigner. He was not an inhabitant of that land where sin is acknowledged. He passed through the wilderness of suffering, but into the wilderness of sin he could never go. “He knew no sin.” Mark that expression and treasure it up and when you are thinking of your Substitute and see Him hang bleeding upon the Cross, think that you see written in those lines of blood, written along His blessed body, “He knew no sin.” Mingled with the redness of His blood—that Rose of Sharon—behold the purity of His nature, the Lily of the Valley—“He knew no sin.”

II. Let us pass on to notice the second and most important point; THE ACTUAL SUBSTITUTION OF CHRIST and THE REAL IMPUTATION OF SIN TO HIM. “He made Him to be sin for us.”

Here be careful to observe who transferred the sin. God the Father laid on Jesus the iniquities of us all. Man could not make Christ sin. Man could not transfer his guilt to another. It is not for us to say whether Christ could or could not have made Himself sin for us. But certain it is, He did not take this priesthood upon Himself, but He was called of God, as was Aaron. The Redeemer’s vicarious position is warranted, no, ordained by Divine authority. “He has made Him to be sin for us.”

I must now beg you to notice how very explicit the term is. Some of our expositors will have it that the word here used must mean “sin-offering.” “He made Him to be a sin-offering for us.” I thought it well to look to my Greek Testament to see whether it could be so. Of course we all know that the word here translated “sin,” is very often translated “sin-offering,” but it is always useful, when you have a disputed passage, to look it through and see whether in this case the word would bear such a meaning. These commentators say it means a sin-offering—well, I will read it—“He has made Him to be a sin-offering for us who knew no sin-offering.” Does not that strike you as being ridiculous? They are precisely the same words—and if it is fair to translate it “sin-offering” in one place, it must, in all reason, be fair to translate it so in the other.

The fact is, while in some passages it may be rendered “sin-offering,” in this passage it cannot be so, because it would be to run counter to all honesty to translate the same word in the same sentence two different ways. No. We must take them as they stand. “He has made Him to be sin for us,” not merely an offering, but *sin* for us.

My predecessor, Dr. Gill, edited the works of Tobias Crisp, but Tobias Crisp went further than Dr. Gill or any of us can approve. For in one place Crisp calls Christ a sinner, though he does not mean that He ever sinned himself. He actually calls Christ a transgressor and justifies himself by that passage, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” Martin Luther is reputed to have broadly said that, although Jesus Christ was sinless, yet He was the greatest sinner that ever lived, because all the sins of His people lay upon Him.

Now, such expressions, I think, to be unguarded, if not profane. Certainly Christian men should take care that they use not language which, by the ignorant and uninstructed, may be translated to mean what they never intended to teach. The fact is, Brethren, that in no sense whatever—take that as I say it—in no sense whatever—can Jesus Christ ever be conceived of as having been guilty. “He knew no sin.” Not only was He not guilty of sinning, but He was not guilty of *our* sins. No *guilt* can possibly be ascribed to a man who has not been guilty. He must have had complicity in the deed itself, or else no guilt can possibly be laid on him.

Jesus Christ stands in the midst of all the Divine thunders and suffers all the punishment, but not a drop of sin ever stained Him. In no sense is He ever a guilty man, but always is He an accepted and a holy One. What, then, is the meaning of that very forcible expression of my text? We must interpret Scriptural modes of expression by the verbiage of the speakers. We know that our Master once said, Himself, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.” He did not mean that the cup was the covenant. He said, “Take, eat, this is My body”—no one of us conceives that the bread is the literal flesh and blood of Christ. We take that bread as if it were the body but it only represents it.

Now, we are to read a passage like this—according to the analogy of faith Jesus Christ was made by His Father sin for us, that is, He was treated as if He had Himself been sin. He was not sin—He was not sinful. He was not guilty. But, He was *treated* by His Father, as if He had not only been sinful, but as if He had been *sin itself*. That is a strong expression used here.

Not only has He made Him to be the substitute for sin, but to be *sin*. God looked on Christ as if Christ had been sin. Not as if He had taken up the sins of His people, or as if they were laid on Him, though that were true, but as if He Himself had positively been that noxious—that God-hating—that soul-damning thing, called *sin*. When the Judge of all the earth said, “Where is Sin?” Christ presented Himself. He stood before His Father as if He had been the accumulation of all human guilt of the elect. As if He Himself were that thing which God cannot endure, but which He must drive from His presence forever.

And now see how this making of Jesus to be sin was enacted to the fullest extent. The righteous Lord looked on Christ as being sin and therefore Christ must be taken without the camp. Sin cannot be borne in God’s Zion—cannot be allowed to dwell in God’s Jerusalem. It must be taken without the camp—it is a leprous thing—put it away. Cast out from fellowship, from love, from pity—sin must ever be. Take Him away, take Him away, you crowd! Hurry Him through the streets and bear Him to Calvary. Take Him without the camp—as was the beast which was offered for sin without the camp—so must Christ be, who was made sin for us.

And now, God looks on Him as being sin, and sin must bear punishment. Christ is punished. The most fearful of deaths is exacted at His hands and God has no pity on Him. How could He have pity on sin? God hates it. No tongue can tell, no soul can discern the terrible hatred of God to that which is evil and He treats Christ as if He were sin. Jesus prays—but Heaven shuts out His prayer. He cries for water, but Heaven and earth refuse to wet His lips except with vinegar. He turns His eyes to Heaven, He sees nothing there. How could He? God cannot look on sin and sin can have no claim on God—“My God, My God,” Jesus cries, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

O solemn necessity, how could God do anything with sin but forsake it? How could iniquity have fellowship with God? Shall Divine smiles rest on sin? No, no, it must not be. Therefore is it that He who is made sin must bemoan desertion and terror. God cannot touch Him, cannot dwell with Him, cannot come near Him. He is abhorred, cast away. It has pleased the Father to bruise him. He has put Him to grief. At last He dies. God will not keep Him in life—how could He? Is it not the most necessary thing in the world that sin should be buried? “Bury it out of My sight, hide this corruption,” and lo! Jesus, as if He were sin, is put away out of the sight of God and man as a thing obnoxious.

I do not know whether I have clearly uttered what I wanted to state, but what a grim picture that is, to conceive of sin gathered up into one mass—murder, lust and rapine and adultery and all manner of crime—all piled together in one hideous heap. We ourselves, Brethren, impure though we are, could not bear this—how much less should God with His pure and holy eyes bear with that mass of sin and yet there it is. God looked upon Christ as if He were that mass of sin. He was not sin, but He looked upon Him as made sin for us. He stands in our place, assumes our guilt, takes on Him our iniquity and God treats Him as if He had been sin.

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, let us just lift up our hearts with gratitude for a few moments. Here we are tonight. We know that we are guilty, but our sins have all been punished years ago. Before my soul believed in Christ, the punishment of my sins had all been endured. We are not to think that Christ’s blood derives its efficacy from our faith. Fact *precedes* faith. Christ has redeemed us—faith discovers this—but it was a fact long before we knew it and an undisputed fact, too.

Today we are secure because of that finished sacrifice. Though still defiled by sin, yet who can lay anything to the charge of the man whose guilt is gone, lifted bodily from off him and put upon Christ? How can any punishment fall on that man who ceases to possess sins, because his sin has eighteen hundred years ago been cast upon Christ and Christ has suffered in his place? Oh, glorious triumph of faith to be able to say, whenever I feel the guilt of sin, whenever conscience pricks me, “Yes. it is true, but my Lord is answerable for it all, for He has taken it all upon Himself and suffered in my place.”

How precious when I see my debts, to be able to say, “Yes, but the blood of Christ, God’s dear Son, has cleansed me from all sin!” How precious, not only to see my sin dying when I believe, but to know that it was dead, it was gone, it

ceased to be, eighteen hundred years ago. All the sins that you and I have ever committed, or ever shall commit, if we are heirs of mercy and children of God, are all dead things—

*“Our Jesus nailed them to His Cross,
And sung the triumph when He rose.”*

These cannot rise in judgment to condemn—they have all been slain, shrouded, buried. They are removed from us as far as the east is from the west, because “He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin”

III. You see, then, the reality of the imputation of sin to Christ from the amazing doctrine that Christ is made sin for us. But now notice the concluding thought, upon which I must dwell a moment, but it must be very briefly, for two reasons—my time has gone and my strength has gone, too.

“THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.” Now, here, I beg you to notice, that it does not simply say that we might be made righteous, but “that we might be made *the righteousness* of God in Him.” As if righteousness, that lovely, glorious, God-honoring, God-delighting thing—as if we were actually made *that*. God looks on His people as being abstract righteousness, not only righteous, but righteousness. To be righteous, is as if a man should have a box covered with gold, the box would then be golden. But to be righteousness is to have a box of solid gold. To be a righteous man is to have righteousness cast over me. But to be made *righteousness*, that is to be made solid essential righteousness in the sight of God.

Well now, this is a glorious fact and a most wonderful privilege, that we poor sinners are made “the righteousness of God in Him.” God sees no sin in any one of His people, no iniquity in Jacob when he looks upon them in Christ. In themselves He sees nothing but filth and abomination—in Christ nothing but purity and *righteousness*. Is it not, and must it not ever be to the Christian, one of his most delightful privileges to know that altogether apart from anything that we have ever done, or can do, God looks upon His people as being righteous? No, as being *righteousness*—and that despite all the sins they have ever committed—they are accepted in Him as if they had been Christ, while Christ was punished for them as if *He* had been sin.

Why, when I stand in my own place, I am lost and ruined. My place is the place where Judas stood, the place where the devil lies in everlasting shame. But when I stand in Christ’s place—and I fail to stand where faith has put me till I stand there—when I stand in Christ’s place, the Father’s everlastingly Beloved One, the Father’s Accepted One, Him whom the Father delights to honor—when I stand there, I stand where faith has a right to put me and I am in the most joyous spot that a creature of God can occupy. Oh, Christian, get up, get up into the high mountain and stand where your Savior stands, for that is your place.

Lie not there on the dunghill of fallen humanity—that is not your place. Christ has once taken it on your behalf. “He made Him to be sin for us.” Your place is yonder there, above the starry hosts, where He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Him. Not there, at the Day of Judgment, where the wicked shriek for shelter and beg for the hills to cover them. But there, where Jesus sits upon His Throne—*there* is your place, my Soul. He will make you to sit upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with His Father upon *His* Throne.

Oh, that I could mount to the heights of this argument tonight—it needs a seraphic preacher to picture the saint in Christ, robed in Christ’s righteousness, wearing Christ’s nature, bearing Christ’s palm of victory, sitting on Christ’s Throne, wearing Christ’s crown. And yet this is our privilege! He wore my crown of thorns. I wear His crown, the crown of glory. He wore my dress, no, rather, he wore my nakedness when He died upon the Cross—I wear His robes, the royal robes of the King of kings. He bore my shame. I bear His honor. He endured my sufferings to this end that my joy may be full and that His joy may be fulfilled in me. He laid in the grave that I might rise from the dead and that I may dwell in Him. And all this He comes again to give me, to make it sure to me and to all that love His appearing, to show that all His people shall enter into their inheritance.

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, Mr. Maurice, McLeod Campbell and their great admirer, Mr. Brown, may go on with their preaching as long as they like—but they will never make a convert of a man who knows what the vitality of religion is. For he who knows what substitution means, he who knows what it is to stand where Christ stands—will never care to occupy the ground on which Mr. Maurice stands. He who has ever been made to sit together with Christ and once to enjoy the real preciousness of a transfer of Christ’s righteousness to him and his sin to Christ—that man has eaten the bread of Heaven and will never renounce it for husks.

No, my Brethren, we could lay down our lives for this Truth of God rather than give it up. No, we cannot by any means turn aside from this glorious stability of faith and for this good reason—there is nothing for us in the doctrine which these men teach. It may suit intellectual gentlefolk, I dare say it does. But it will not suit us. We are poor sinners and nothing at all, and if Christ is not our All in All, there is nothing for us. I have often thought the best answer for all these new ideas is that the true Gospel was always preached to the poor—“The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” I am sure that the poor will never learn the Gospel of these new divines, for they cannot make heads or tails of it, nor the rich, either.

After you have read through one of their volumes, you have not the least idea of what the book is about, until you have read it through eight or nine times. And then you begin to think you are a very stupid being for ever having read such inflated heresy, for it sours your temper and makes you feel angry to see the precious Truths of God trod under foot. Some of us must stand out against these attacks on the Truth of God, although we love not controversy. We rejoice in the liberty of our fellow men and would have them proclaim their convictions. But if they touch these precious things, they touch the apple of our eye.

We can allow a thousand opinions in the world, but that which infringes upon the precious doctrine of a covenant salvation, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—against that we must and will—enter our hearty and solemn protest as long as God spares us. Take away once from us those glorious doctrines and where are we, Brethren? We may lay down and die for nothing remains that is worth living for. We have come to the valley of the shadow of death when we find these doctrines to be untrue. If these things which I speak to you tonight are not the Truths of Christ, if they are not true, there is no comfort left for any poor man under God’s sky and it were better for us never to have been born.

I may say what Jonathan Edwards says at the end of his book, “If any man could disprove the doctrines of the Gospel, he should then sit down and weep to think they were not true, for,” says he, “it would be the most dreadful calamity that could happen to the world, to have a glimpse of such truths and then for them to melt away in the thin air of fiction, as having no substantiality in them.”

Stand up for the Truth of Christ. I would not have you be bigoted, but I would have you be decided. Do not give countenance to any of this trash and error which is going abroad, but stand firm. Be not turned away from your steadfastness by any pretense at intellectuality and high philosophy, but earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints and hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard of us and have been taught, even as you have read in this sacred Book, which is the way of everlasting life.

Thus, Beloved, without gathering up my strength for the fray, or attempting to analyze the subtleties of those who would pervert the simple Gospel, I speak out my mind and utter the kindling of my heart among you. Little enough will you reckon over whom the Holy Spirit has given me the oversight, what the grievous wolves may design if you keep within the fold. Break not the sacred bounds wherein God has enclosed His Church. He has encircled us in the arms of covenant love. He has united us in indissoluble bonds to the Lord Jesus. He has fortified us with the assurance that the Holy Spirit shall guide us into all truth. God grant that those beyond the pale of visible fellowship with us in this eternal Gospel may see their danger and escape from the fowler’s snare!

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