

SERMON BY ELDER CHARLES DERRY,

At Lamoni, Iowa, April 15, 1894.

Subject, OBJECT OF THE GOSPEL.

“BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

I had hoped to pass this conference without having to stand in public, but as the duty is imposed upon me, by God's help I will discharge it to the best of my ability. The only subject that presents itself to my mind is the object for which the gospel of Christ has been given to men. We all recognize the fact that we are the creatures of God and that man in his primal state was pure, was innocent, without sin, and consequently without condemnation; but that in yielding to the tempter, whose purpose it is to destroy man, he became the subject of sin, as Christ when upon the earth declared, that “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” and an alien from the fold and family of God. The purpose that God had in view from the beginning, from before the foundations of the earth were laid, was to prepare man for a higher, and better, and more glorious condition than even that in which he was placed in the morn of creation; and when man had become a fallen being, alienated from the fold and family of God, we find the divine purpose manifest in seeking his redemption and the final accomplishment of his purpose in giving to him eternal life. For this purpose we understand that Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, offered himself a sacrifice to redeem man, to make it possible for him to become once more a child of God, not simply by any creative act nor any supernatural operation of God's power in compelling him to become his child, but that he might become a child of God of his

own will and choice through the means that God had devised for this purpose. Hence Jesus Christ, having rendered it possible through his death and resurrection, we find also that he introduces the plan, the means by which all mankind can become the children of God. This plan appeals to their intelligence, their judgment, their will in the matter. It does not propose to compel them; it invites; and as Christ has made it possible, the gospel which he taught is the means whereby that possibility may be accomplished and we may become indeed the sons of God. I need not quote to this audience passage after passage to prove this truth that the purpose of God was that all mankind should become his children. This is well known to you all.

When Christ came in the first place, we find that it is said, “To as many as believed on him, gave he power to become the sons of God.” It is then through our faith in him that we have the power to become the sons of God, but we may become the sons of God and yet not have accomplished the purpose which God has intended. We can understand that it is quite possible for us to be children even of God and yet not have attained to that high and holy condition which the gospel of Christ is intended to bring us up unto. There are such things or beings as disobedient children sometimes, and while we may be the children of God by adoption, we may be disobedient children, and in that condition the purpose of the gospel cannot have been answered in us. But I understand the intention of the gospel of Christ is to make us like unto him, to make us like Christ; being born of God through obedience unto the gospel we are to become like unto Christ, and this is the only purpose for which God sent his Son into the world, that he might set an example of a holy life, his divine nature, his character, that he might exhibit unto mankind an example of purity, of righteousness, of truth, of love,

of peace, in fact, of every excellence that it is essential for intelligence to be adorned with. This example we read of in the word of God. We read of his life, we read of the trials, of the temptations, of the perplexities, the persecution, the hatred, the envy, and all the evils with which he had to come in contact. And it was essential that he should be surrounded with all these to show unto mankind that it was possible to live even in this corrupt world with all its sin, with all its fascinations and allurements, with all its corruption, and yet keep free from all taint, his garments unstained, his hands clean, his heart pure, his mind free from every evil. I say this was one of the reasons that God sent Christ into the world that he might give an exhibition of this fact, an example of this fact, that it was possible to live even in this world, with all its corruption, a life of purity and righteousness.

I know some may suppose, as it is supposed by numbers, that, being the Son of God, there was such power and influence thrown around him, environments of such a nature, that these evils were warded off from him. Or, again, that he was endowed with such power, simply because he was the Son of God, not because of any extra righteousness on his part; that he was necessarily endowed with such power as to be able to shield himself from all these things; that there was a special and particular power given to him to sustain him because he was the Son of God. I do not so understand the position of the Lord Jesus Christ. I understand that when he came here, and this book tells me, that he took upon himself our nature. If he took upon himself our nature, we know something of what that nature is; we know how frail, how weak, how liable we are to go astray. If he took upon himself that nature, there was the same liability with him, the same possibility with him to wander from the paths of truth, and righteousness, and virtue, as there is with any and every other man and woman. I understand that Jesus Christ kept the will of God because it was his will so to do. It was the desire of his heart so to do. I understand that he was tempted in all points like as we are. If you attribute omnipotence to him as he stood clothed in the flesh, if you at-

tribute infinite wisdom, infinite knowledge and power unto him, then there could be no temptation from this world below; the things of this world could have no influence upon him; there could be no temptations; none could assail a being of that kind. Were I clothed with omnipotence, endowed with all the infinite power and knowledge of God, would all the temptations of Satan affect me? Not in the least. I should be so high above them, so great that they could not reach me; they could have no influence. Had this been the condition of the Son of God, then, it would not and could not have been said truthfully that he was in all points tempted as we are and yet without sin. He was as liable to sin as you or I, if he chose to yield himself to it. God did not surround him with influences that rendered it impossible for him to sin, but because of the righteous desire of his soul, because of the purity of his motive, because of the uprightness of his conduct he was endowed with power to enable him to resist sin, and he resisted that sin. He was strengthened in every hour of weakness when he called upon his God and Father for help. Angels administered to him when he sought their administration, and I opine that he never received power nor blessing from God only as he sought that blessing just the same as you and I should seek.

I find him retiring alone and praying. For what? That which he already possessed? No, never; but realizing the weakness of this human nature that he had clothed himself with, how weak and frail it was and that he needed to watch and to pray continually, he went before his Father and his God and prayed for that strength that would enable him to endure, that would enable him to overcome that he might answer the divine purpose in the redemption of humanity.

And because Jesus Christ has overcome we too may overcome, each and every man and woman may overcome. How and by what means? The same means, the same power is for us as for him. God is just as willing to bless the least of his creatures to-day as he was to bless his Son Jesus Christ in that day, if we only seek unto him. It is written that God is no respecter of persons. I understand this language in no limited sense as applying to the character of God and his willing-

ness to bless all creation, all the intelligence that he has given existence unto, and that he is just as willing to bless and to save humanity and to hear and answer their prayers in every particular that is essential for their welfare as he was to hear the prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And hence I can see some force in the example that he set to the sons and daughters of men. I can see some meaning in the same. It means that I am to follow that example, to tread the path that he trod, to keep my Father's will as he kept his Father's will. It means that I am to become like him in all things, in intelligence, and power, and, in fact, in every perfection, in every purity, in every blessedness, in every glory. I am called upon to be like him and to prepare myself for that grand accomplishment of the purpose of God.

We are indeed, as the apostle says, the sons of God, and herein is the love of God made manifest. What is this poor creation to him? This little world of ours with all the teeming millions that are dwelling thereon? What are they in the presence of the infinite God whose works cannot be comprehended, cannot be measured, cannot be numbered? What are we? When weighed in the balance we are as nothing, and yet "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and here is evidence, friends, that he is desirous to bless the least among the children of men as he was to bless his Son when he was here below. He gave that Son for us. Had he not loved the world with an equal love with that which he exercised toward his Son would he have given that Son to have redeemed us? The very fact that he gave that Son to be our Redeemer is an evidence of the fact that he loves all the creatures that his hands have made; that he is willing to exalt us, to save us, and make us not only his sons and daughters, but to clothe us with his likeness, to enable us to attain unto that likeness that we may be enabled to enjoy all the glory and the blessedness of the same. Yes, that love was boundless indeed; it cannot be measured by your finite minds nor mine. Eternity must reveal the height and depth of that love; it cannot be measured in time. No, friends, it is too grand, too great, too

deep, too wide, too high, too glorious for poor humanity to measure and to comprehend, but we can see that he has loved us in calling us to become the sons and daughters of God.

But we are not to be content with that; we are to become like him, like Christ. We are to take upon ourselves the divine nature, to be partakers of the divine nature. Have we come to that yet? Can any of us say that we have attained to that? We have heard the gospel—some of us a great many years ago, some of us bowed in obedience to it a great many years ago, and have been struggling against all the evils of this nature; but O, when we compare ourselves, when we measure ourselves by the standard of the Lord Jesus Christ, when we measure ourselves by the infinite heights of the excellencies of the Son of God, O how dwarfed we are! We are as nothing. We are as the Prophet Isaiah said, "our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" compared to his excellence. And yet perhaps we have made some progress in that divine life; and when we look back to the pit from whence we were hewn, the hole of the pit from whence we were dug, that corruption, that degradation to which we had sunk when this gospel found us; when the light shone first upon our minds and made us to some extent acquainted with our condition; when we have compared ourselves with that condition and think of what we loved then, what we sought after then, when we do this and then begin to examine ourselves, we can measure just how far we have advanced in the divine light. If that which I then loved that was evil, that was corrupt, that was base, that was mandefling and God-dishonoring, if I love that to-day, then I have made no advance in the divine life; that divine nature I am not yet clothed with. But if I find that the things which I loved then I have no desire for now; if I find that the corruption in which I then loved to wallow I desire now to keep infinitely far from, then I can find that I have made some advance at least in the divine life, and just in proportion as I have followed out those righteous desires, just in that proportion I have been clothed upon with the divine nature.

We can all look upon ourselves and understand ourselves if we will study

ourselves properly. The wise man said it was indeed a wise man that knew his folly, and let me tell you, it is a wise man that seeks to know his own folly. Don't let us be puffed up with our wisdom and imagine that we know all things. Let us seek to know our folly, the depth of it, the evil of it, that we may put it away. Each and every man should know his own heart, deceitful as it may be; he should fathom its depths, he should understand it, all the influences that could be brought to bear upon it, he should understand them, and his weakness oftentimes in yielding, his liability to yield thereunto. These things we should understand, and when we thus understand ourselves and measure ourselves by the law of God, measure ourselves by the divine life of the Lord Jesus Christ, I say, how dwarfed we look, how dwarfed we are by the side of the divine standard; and yet the grand purpose of the gospel is to bring us to be like unto him, to clothe us with that divine nature, that the Holy Spirit of God may work in us until it has perfected our nature and made us like unto him.

This is the grand climax of the Christian's life, and of the life of the child of God, to become like him. Then we shall be prepared indeed for all his joys, for all his glory, for all his blessedness; in fact, as the apostle has expressed it, to be filled with all the fullness of God; that is the destiny of the sons and daughters of God, to be filled with all the fullness of God. You can imagine all the honors and all the glories, if you please, all the excellencies and all the power that may be attached unto this condition of being like God, like Christ, filled with all the fullness of God, but there is no height, no depth, no length, no breadth that is not attained in this great fullness of God, and we are invited to come up unto the same. It is a high, sacred, and glorious calling indeed. Yes, it cannot be compared with anything on the earth or under the heavens. All the honor, all the power, all the glory, all the wealth of earth is as nothing; it is less than nothing in comparison to this honor and glory of being like unto Christ, of being exalted unto that perfection, that blessedness, that joy, that power, that dominion.

I want to ask this morning what prog-

ress we are making in this divine life? It is essential that we should stop and consider; examine ourselves; keep the mark of the prize of our high calling in view. The mark of the prize is the excellence of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we have attained to that mark we shall gain the prize; and let us measure ourselves continually by that standard, and see to it that we are working to that end, working in that direction, that we may become like unto Christ.

Is the gospel adapted to bring us to this condition? Examine it and see if you can find anything in it that is not exalting in its nature, that is not purifying in its tendency, that is not enlightening to the soul, that is not exalting to the being. You can find nothing. Friends, we have searched this gospel a good many years. I have tried to look into its depths, and comprehend it. I have tried, too, to see if there was anything in it that was derogatory to the interests of men, that dwarfed the intellect, that marred the character of humanity, and if there was I didn't want it. In all my researches, and delving, and seeking to find out its real nature, I find nothing but what tends to exalt, tends to purify, tends to ennoble, tends to happy and bless. This is the character of the gospel of Christ, and for that reason I have given my life to it and expect to continue that life because I see it is the only means whereby I can be brought up into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men may introduce systems, and plans, and schemes for the elevation of their fellow men, and there may be some good associated with them, but let me tell you, they dwarf into nothingness compared with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That condescends to the lowest depths to which humanity could possibly sink, it enters into his whole being, into his very nature physically, morally, and spiritually, and it lifts the man from a state of degradation and sin into the highest state of blessedness, and exaltation, and glory. This is what the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ does.

Take, for instance, the principle of faith and see how elevating it is in its nature. Let me illustrate for a moment. Suppose you have a man or woman in your neighborhood that you look upon as a pattern of excellence, that his life is of

such a nature that he commands your respect, your esteem, and your love. You have learned to believe in that man or woman. What has that principle of faith that you have placed in that man or woman done for you? I will tell you: If you have allowed it to have its perfect work, it has drawn you nearer to him, and in order to get nearer to him you must become assimilated to his character, and you have felt the necessity of this, and hence you have tried to be like him. That is the nature and tendency of our faith in even a good man or woman. We love his excellencies and we want to attain unto them, we want to associate with such. And now I am called on to believe in God, and there I find the infinity of all excellence, excellence that cannot be measured by my finite mind. I find all that is pure, that is holy, that is good, and just, and true, embodied in his character, and I am called upon to believe in him; and just so sure as I do place my faith in him, I see nothing but what I can love, but what commands my love. It calls forth every principle of love in this nature towards him; it fastens my affections upon God, and I desire to be in his presence. But how can I stand in his presence until I become like him? How can I dwell in his presence until I am clothed upon with his likeness? I cannot; hence the principle of *faith* leads me on step by step to every excellence that intelligence can be clothed with, and I see and feel the necessity of being clothed with this excellence that I might become like God.

I know some men tell me that faith is enslaving; that it demands the enslaving of our nature, and yet perhaps there are none in the world that are greater slaves to the principles of faith than they are, but they believe in their poor puny selves, and there is the fault. They think they are the paragon of all excellence, the acme of all good they imagine, and the man is a slave to his own self-conceit. But when I fix my faith upon that which is higher, grander, nobler, purer, I don't become the slave. No, it bursts off the shackles from my hands and feet, the manacles from my mind, and I begin to emerge into the liberty of the sons and daughters of God. I feel that I am a free man in Christ Jesus and that while

the world may be enslaved, I can rejoice in the liberty of the children of God. That is what faith does for me and what it does for every individual that exercises the same.

The principle of repentance: what does that do? You know what it is. It is the putting away of all that is evil. Can you put away all that is evil without being correspondingly clothed upon with the good? No, it is an impossibility; you cannot! As you put away the evil, you espouse the good; you take upon yourself the robe of righteousness just in proportion as you put away the old garment of sin and abomination, just in that proportion you are clothed upon with the righteousness of God. Repentance, then, is in harmony with the grand and glorious principle of faith; it has a tendency to purify the heart, to remove all corruption from our nature, and to render possible the clothing of ourselves with all that is good, and holy, and pure.

And here let me say with respect to the principle of faith, that while it serves as a first step in the ladder, it also serves as the hand railing in that ladder by which we climb step by step into all the excellence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall never see the time that we can dispense with that principle of faith. And I am not sure that we shall see a time when we can dispense (as far as this earth-life is concerned, I am speaking) with that principle of repentance; for as long as these weaknesses of our nature are manifest, as long as we find ourselves sometimes stepping into the dark, just so often we shall need this principle of repentance, that we may be enabled to be clear of all encumbrance, of all weakness, of all that hinders our progress in the divine life. In fact, take all the principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—I mean these first principles that some imagine there is not sufficient ground in them for them to spend a life in illustrating. Taking all those principles if you please, and you will find there is something high as heaven, deep as the depths below; broad as eternity. They are simply the key-words to every other excellence, and power, and glory in the kingdom of our God. We never can dispense with them when we bow before God in obedience to the divine will. I think I read here in God's word speaking

of Adam, he says by baptism we obey the commandment—search in Genesis 5th chapter I think (Inspired Translation), and you will find what I am speaking about. We obey the commandment when we render obedience in the waters of baptism. There we manifest our submission to God; there we make our covenants with our Father and our God that we will put off the old man with his deeds; that we will dispense with the old life, and we will put on the new man which is Christ Jesus; that we will from that moment live a new life; and when the Holy Spirit of God descends upon us, it quickens our spirits, it brings us who have been dead in sin, it presents us now to a life of righteousness, makes us alive unto God, and we go on from step to step until we obtain the Holy Spirit of the living God, the baptism of the Holy Spirit that shall strengthen our inner man, and shall fit and prepare us to combat with all the evils, with all the fascination, with all the allurements of the world, and overcome all the evils of our nature.

Friends, my experience has taught me through life that the worst evils I have to contend with are not those of the outside world. I look upon them with horror and disgust as I see them. But when I turn my eyes inward I find right here in my own nature a foe far more deadly to me, far more effectual in dragging me down than all the evils that are without. If I have lurking within my own soul that which is of an evil nature, that which is impure and unholy, there is a foe that is more deadly to me than all the influences of the world. And while I feel

disgusted at seeing the evils of the world, I am filled with terror when I behold the evils in my own nature, and I feel there is a necessity of struggling day by day, moment by moment, in fact, hour by hour, until I shall have accomplished all that God has designed to accomplish through his gospel in me, the eradication of every evil from my being, and being clothed upon with the righteousness of God.

Brethren and sisters, God has called us to a holy calling, and he has called us to a grand and glorious exaltation, to become like unto Christ. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." John felt that it had not appeared in him even. The apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ that had stood as it were in the visions of heaven, had beheld the glory of God, had heard his voice, had had the ministration of angels continually, he could say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." It had not yet appeared in him, it has not yet appeared in us.

Friends, let us so live; let us apply the gospel of Christ in our lives; let us keep the fountain pure, our hearts pure, our thoughts pure, and our words will be pure and our actions will be pure and right, and we shall go on from step to step until we have attained unto that likeness, and when we have attained unto that likeness, we shall be crowned upon with glory. May God help us so to live that we may be crowned upon with that likeness, is my prayer in Christ's name. Amen.

(Reported for the *Herald* by Belle Robinson.)

SYNOPSIS OF SERMONS

Delivered at Southern California Reunion, Downey, California, July, 1894.

ELDER M. H. FORSCUTT:—

THE text will be found in Acts 16:30: "What must I do to be saved?" There were two men to whom this was addressed, Paul and Silas. While they were in prison the Lord heard the prayers offered up for them, and their chains were loosed. The jailer, hearing a noise, came, and

seeing them freed, asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul accepted the question from a spiritual standpoint, and said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I shall now treat on the questions, "May I be saved without baptism?" and, "Can children be saved without baptism?"