

CHRIST THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN



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CHRIST: THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

—Genesis 3:15

THIS [verse] is the first gospel sermon that was ever delivered upon the surface of this earth. It was a memorable discourse indeed, with Jehovah Himself for the preacher, and the whole human race and the prince of darkness for the audience. It must be worthy of our heartiest attention.

Is it not remarkable that this great gospel promise should have been delivered so soon after the transgression? As yet no sentence had been pronounced upon either of the two human offenders, but the promise was given under the form of a sentence pronounced upon the serpent. Not yet had the woman been condemned to painful travail, or the man to exhausting labour, or even the soil to the curse of thorn and thistle. Truly “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (Jam 2:13). Before the Lord had said “dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return” (Gen 3:19), He was pleased to say that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. Let us rejoice, then, in the swift mercy of God, which in the early watches of the night of sin came with comfortable words unto us.

These words were not directly spoken to Adam and Eve, but they were directed distinctly to the serpent himself, and that by way of punishment to him for what he had done. It was a day of cruel triumph to him: such joy as his dark mind is capable of had filled him, for had he indulged his malice, and gratified his spite. He had in the worst sense destroyed a part of God’s works; he had introduced sin into the new world; he had stamped the human race with his own image, and gained new forces to promote rebellion and to multiply transgression. And therefore he felt that sort of gladness which a fiend can know who bears a hell within him. But now God comes in, takes up the quarrel personally, and causes him to be disgraced on the very battle-field upon which he had gained a temporary success. He tells the dragon that He will undertake to deal with him; this quarrel shall not be between the serpent and man, but between God and the serpent. God saith, in solemn words, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed,” and He promised that there shall rise in fullness of time a Champion, Who, though He suffer, shall smite in a vital part the power of evil, and bruise the serpent’s head. This was the more, it seems to me, a comfortable message of mercy to Adam and Eve, because they would feel sure that the tempter would be punished; and as that punishment would involve blessing for them, the vengeance due to the serpent would be the guarantee of mercy to themselves. Perhaps, however, by thus obliquely giving the promise, the Lord meant to say, “Not for your sakes do I this, O fallen man and

woman, nor for the sake of your descendants; but for My own Name and honour's sake, that it be not profaned and blasphemed amongst the fallen spirits. I undertake to repair the mischief which has been caused by the tempter, that My Name and My glory may not be diminished among the immortal spirits who look down upon the scene." All this would be very humbling but yet consolatory to our parents if they thought of it, seeing that mercy given for God's sake is always to our troubled apprehension more sure than any favour which could be promised to us for our own sake. The divine sovereignty and glory afford us a stronger foundation of hope than merit, even if merit can be supposed to exist.

Now we must note concerning this first gospel sermon that on it the earliest believers stayed themselves. This was all that Adam had by way of revelation, and all that Abel had received. This one lone star shone in Abel's sky; he looked up to it and he believed. By its light he spelt out "sacrifice," and therefore he brought of the firstlings of his flock and laid them on the altar, and proved in his own person how the seed of the serpent hated the seed of the woman; for his brother slew him for his testimony. Although Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied concerning the second advent, yet he does not appear to have uttered anything new concerning the first coming, so that still this one promise remained as man's sole Word of hope. The torch which flamed within the gates of Eden just before man was driven forth lit up the world to all believers until the Lord was pleased to give more light, and to renew and enlarge the revelation of His covenant, when He spake to His servant Noah. Those hoary¹ fathers who lived before the flood rejoiced in the mysterious language of our text; and resting on it, they died in faith. Nor, brethren, must you think it a slender revelation, for, if you attentively consider, it is wonderfully full of meaning. If it had been on my heart to handle it doctrinally this morning, I think I could have shown you that it contains all the gospel. There lie within it, as an oak lies within an acorn, all the great truths which make up the gospel of Christ. Observe that here is the grand mystery of incarnation. Christ is that Seed of the woman Who is here spoken of; and there is a hint not darkly given as to how that Incarnation would be effected. Jesus [the Man] was not shadowed of the Holy Ghost, and "that holy thing" (Luk 1:35) which was born of her was, as to His humanity, the seed of the woman only; as it is written, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa 7:14). The promise plainly teaches that the Deliverer would be born of a woman, and carefully viewed, it also foreshadows the divine method of the Redeemer's conception and birth. So also is the doctrine of the two seeds plainly taught here—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." There was evidently to be in the world a seed of the woman on God's side against the serpent, and a seed of the serpent that should always be upon the evil side, even as it is unto this day. The Church of God and the synagogue of Satan both exist. We see an Abel and a Cain, an Isaac and an Ishmael, a Jacob and an Esau; those that are born after the flesh, being the children of their father the devil, for his works they do. But those that are born again—being born after the Spirit, after the power of the life of Christ, are thus

¹ **hoary** – white or gray (haired) with age.

in Christ Jesus the seed of the woman, and contend earnestly against the dragon and his seed. Here, too, the great fact of the sufferings of Christ is clearly foretold—"Thou shalt bruise his heel." Within the compass of those words we find the whole story of our Lord's sorrows from Bethlehem to Calvary. "It shall bruise thy head"—there is the breaking of Satan's regal power; there is the clearing away of sin. There is the destruction of death by resurrection; there is the leading of captivity captive in the ascension. There is the victory of truth in the world through the descent of the Spirit, and there is the latter-day glory in which Satan shall be bound. And there is, lastly, the casting of the evil one and all his followers into the lake of fire. The conflict and the conquest are both in the compass of these few fruitful words. They may not have been fully understood by those who first heard them, but to us they are now full of light. The text at first looks like a flint, hard and cold; but sparks fly from it plentifully, for hidden fires of infinite love and grace lie concealed within. Over this promise of a gracious God we ought to rejoice exceedingly.

We do not know what our first parents understood by it, but we may be certain that they gathered a great amount of comfort from it. They must have understood that they were not then and there to be destroyed, because the Lord had spoken of a "seed." They would argue that it must be needful that Eve should live if there should be a Seed from her. They understood, too, that if that Seed was to overcome the serpent and bruise his head, it must auger² good to themselves: they could not fail to see that there was some great, some mysterious benefit to be conferred upon them by the victory which their Seed would achieve over the instigator of their ruin. They went on in faith upon this, and were comforted in travail and in toil, and I doubt not both Adam and his wife in the faith thereof entered into everlasting rest.

This morning I intend to handle this text in three ways. First, we shall notice its facts; secondly, we shall consider the experience within the heart of each believer which tallies to those facts; and then, thirdly, the encouragement which the text and its connection as a whole afford to us.

I. The Facts

The facts are four, and I call your earnest attention to them. The first is *enmity was excited*. The text begins, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." They had been very friendly; the woman and the serpent had conversed together. She thought at the time that the serpent was her friend. And she was so much his friend that she took his advice in the teeth of God's precept, and was willing to believe bad things of the great Creator, because this wicked, crafty serpent insinuated the same. Now, at the moment when God spake, that friendship between the woman and the serpent had already in a measure come to an end, for she had accused the serpent to God, and said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat"(Gen 3:13). So far, so good. The friendship of sinners does not last long; they have already begun to quarrel. And now the Lord comes in and graciously

² **auger** – predict or foretell.

takes advantage of the quarrel which had commenced, and says, "I will carry this disagreement a great deal further; I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Satan counted on man's descendants being his confederates, but God would break up this covenant with hell, and raise up a seed which should war against the Satanic power. This we have here God's first declaration that He will set up a rival kingdom to oppose the tyranny of sin and Satan, that He will create in the hearts of a chosen seed an enmity against evil, so that they shall fight against it, and with many a struggle and pain shall overcome the prince of darkness.

The divine Spirit has abundantly achieved this plan and purpose of the Lord, combating the fallen angel by a glorious Man: making man to be Satan's foe and conqueror. Henceforth the woman was to hate the evil one, and I do not doubt that she did so. She had abundant cause for so doing; and as often as she thought of him, it would be with infinite regret that she could have listened to his malicious and deceitful talk. The woman's seed has also evermore had enmity against the evil one. I mean not the carnal seed, for Paul tells us, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom 9:8). The carnal seed of the man and the woman are not meant, but the spiritual Seed, even Christ Jesus and those who are in Him. Wherever you meet these, they hate the serpent with a perfect hatred. We would if we could destroy from our souls every work of Satan; and out of this poor afflicted world of ours we would root up every evil which he has planted. That Seed of the woman, that glorious One—for He speaks not of seeds as of many but of Seed that is One—you know how He abhorred the devil and all his devices. There was enmity between Christ and Satan, for He came to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver those who are under bondage to him. For that purpose was He born; for that purpose did He live; for that purpose did He die. For that purpose He has gone into the glory; and for that purpose He will come again, that everywhere He may find out His adversary and utterly destroy him and his works from amongst the sons of men. This putting of the enmity between the two seeds was the commencement of the plan of mercy, the first act in the programme of grace. Of the woman's Seed it was henceforth said, "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psa 45:7).

Then comes the second prophecy, which has also turned into a fact: namely the coming of the Champion. The Seed of the woman by promise is to champion the cause, and oppose the dragon. That Seed is the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet Micah saith, "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah; though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth" (Mic 5:2-3). To none other than the Babe which was born in Bethlehem of the blessed Virgin can the words of the prophecy refer. She it was who did conceive and bear a Son, and it is concerning her Son that we sing, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). On

the memorable night at Bethlehem, when angels sang in heaven, the Seed of the woman appeared. And as soon as ever He saw the light, the old serpent, the devil, entered into the heart of Herod, if possible to slay Him; but the Father preserved Him, and suffered none to lay hands on Him. As soon as He publicly came forward upon the stage of action, thirty years after, Satan met Him foot to foot. You know the story of the temptation in the wilderness, and how there the woman's Seed fought with him who was a liar from the beginning. The devil assailed Him thrice with all the artillery of flattery, malice, craft and falsehood, but the peerless Champion stood unwounded, and chased His foeman from the field. Then our Lord set up His kingdom, and called one and another unto Him, and carried the war into the enemy's country. In divers places He cast out devils. He spake to the wicked and unclean spirit and said, "I charge thee, come out of him" (Mar 9:25), and the demon was expelled. Legions of devils flew before Him: they sought to hide themselves in swine to escape from the terror of His presence. "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Mat 8:29) was their cry when the wonder-working Christ dislodged them from the bodies which they tormented. Yea, and He made His own disciples mighty against the evil one, for in His name they cast out devils, till Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luk 10:18).

Then there came a second personal conflict, for I take it that Gethsemane's sorrows were to a great degree caused by a personal assault of Satan, for our Master said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luk 22:53). He said also, "The prince of this world cometh" (Joh 14:30). What a struggle it was. Though Satan had nothing in Christ, yet did he seek if possible to lead Him away from completing His great sacrifice, and there did our Master sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground, in the agony which it cost Him to contend with the fiend. Then it was that our Champion began the last fight of all and won it to the bruising of the serpent's head. Nor did He end till He had spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly.

*"Now is the hour of darkness past,
Christ has assumed His reigning power;
Behold the great accuser cast
Down from his seat to reign no more."*

The conflict our glorious Lord continues in His seed. We preach Christ crucified, and every sermon shakes the gates of hell. We bring sinners to Jesus by the Spirit's power, and every convert is a stone torn down from the wall of Satan's mighty castle. Yea, and the day shall come when everywhere the evil one shall be overcome, and the words of John in the Revelation shall be fulfilled. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Rev 12:9-10). Thus did the Lord God in the words of our text promise a Champion Who should be the Seed of the woman, between Whom and Satan

there should be war for ever and ever: that Champion has come, the Man-child has been born, and though the dragon is wroth with the woman, and made war with the remnant of her seed which keep the testimony of Jesus Christ, yet the battle is the Lord's, and the victory falleth unto Him whose name is Faithful and True, Who in righteousness doth judge and make war.

The third fact which comes out in the text, though not quite in that order, is that our Champion's heel should be bruised. Do you need that I explain this? You know how all His life long His heel, that is, His lower part, His human nature, was perpetually being made to suffer. He carried our sicknesses and sorrows. But the bruising came mainly when both in body and in mind His whole human nature was made to agonize; when His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and His enemies pierced His hands and His feet, and He endured the shame and pain of death by crucifixion. Look at your Master and your King upon the Cross, all disdained with blood and dust! There was His heel most cruelly bruised. When they take down that precious body and wrap it in fair white linen and in spices, and lay it in Joseph's tomb, they weep as they handle the casket in which the Deity had dwelt, for there again Satan had bruised His heel. It was not merely that God had bruised Him, for "It pleased the LORD to bruise him" (Isa 53:10), but the devil had let loose Herod, and Pilate, and Caiaphas, and the Jews and the Romans, all of them his tools, upon Him Whom he knew to be the Christ, so that He was bruised of the old serpent. That is all, however! It is only His heel, not His head, which is bruised! For lo, the Champion rises again; the bruise was not mortal nor continual. Though He dies, yet still so brief is the interval in which He slumbers in the tomb that His holy body hath not seen corruption, and He comes forth perfect and lovely in His manhood, rising from His grave as from a refreshing sleep after so long a day of unresting toil! Oh, the triumph of that hour! As Jacob only halted on his thigh when he overcame the angel, so did Jesus only retain a scar in His heel, and that He bears to the skies as His glory and beauty. Before the Throne He looks like a Lamb that has been slain, but in the power of an endless life He liveth unto God.

Then comes the fourth fact, namely that while His heel was being bruised, He was to bruise the serpent's head. The figure represents the dragon as inflicting an injury upon the Champion's heel, but at the same moment the Champion Himself with that heel crushes in the head of the serpent with fatal effect. By His sufferings Christ has overthrown Satan; by the heel that was bruised He has trodden upon the head which devised the bruising.

*"Lo, by the sons of hell He dies;
But as He hangs 'twixt earth and skies,
He gives their prince a fatal blow,
And triumphs o'er the powers below."*

Though Satan is not dead, my brethren—I was about to say, would God he were—and though he is not converted, and never will be, nor will the malice of his heart ever be driven from him, yet Christ has so far broken his head that he has missed his mark

altogether. He intended to make the human race the captives of his power, but they are redeemed from his iron yoke. God has delivered many of them, and the day shall come when He will cleanse the whole earth from the serpent's slimy trail, so that the entire world shall be full of the praises of God. He thought that this world would be the arena of his victory over God and good, instead of which it is already the grandest theatre of divine wisdom, love, grace, and power. Even heaven itself is not so resplendent with mercy as the earth is, for here it is the Saviour poured out His blood, which cannot be said even of the courts of paradise above. Moreover he thought, no doubt, that when he had led our race astray and brought death upon them, he had effectually marred the Lord's work. He rejoiced that they would all pass under the cold seal of death, and that their bodies would rot in the sepulchre. Had he not spoiled the handiwork of his great Lord? God may make man as a curious creature with intertwined veins and blood and nerves, and sinews and muscles, and he may put into his nostrils the breath of life; but, "Ah," saith Satan, "I have infused a poison into him which will make him return to the dust from which he was taken." But now, behold, our Champion Whose heel was bruised has risen from the dead, and given us a pledge that all His followers shall rise from the dead also.

Thus is Satan foiled, for death shall not retain a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of one of those who belonged to the woman's Seed. At the trump of the archangel from the earth and from the sea they shall arise, and this shall be their shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1Co 15:55). Satan, knowing this, feels already that by the resurrection his head is broken. Glory be to the Christ of God for this!

In multitudes of other ways the devil has been vanquished by our Lord Jesus, and so shall he ever be till he shall be cast into the lake of fire.

II. Our Experience

Let us now view *our experience as it tallies with these facts*. Now, brothers and sisters, we were by nature, as many of us as have been saved, the heirs of wrath even as others. It does not matter how godly our parents were; the first birth brought us no spiritual life, for the promise is not to them which are born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but only to those who are born of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (Joh 3:6). You cannot make [it] anything else and there it abides; and the flesh, or carnal mind, abideth in death. It is not reconciled to God, "neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). He who is born into this world but once, and knows nothing of the new birth, must place himself among the seed of the serpent, for only by regeneration can we know ourselves to be the true seed. How does God deal with us who are His called and chosen ones? He means to save us, and how does He work to that end?

The first thing He does is, He comes to us in mercy, and puts enmity between us and the serpent. That is the very first work of grace. There was peace between us and Satan once. When he tempted we yielded; whatever he taught us we believed; we were his willing slaves. But perhaps you, my brethren, can recollect when first of all you began to feel uneasy and dissatisfied; the world's pleasures no longer pleased you; all the juice seemed

to have been taken out of the apple, and you had nothing at all. Then you suddenly perceived that you were living in sin, and you were miserable about it, and though you could not get rid of sin yet you hated it, and sighed over it, and cried, and groaned. In your heart of hearts you remained no longer on the side of evil, for you began to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24). You were already from of old in the covenant of grace ordained to be the woman's seed, and now the decree began to discover itself in life bestowed upon you and working in you. The Lord in infinite mercy dropped the divine life into your soul. You did not know it, but there it was, a spark of the celestial fire, the living and incorruptible seed which abideth for ever. You began to hate sin, and you groaned under it as under a galling yoke; more and more it burdened you, you could not bear it. So it was with you: is it so now? Is there still enmity between you and the serpent? Indeed you are more and more the sworn enemies of evil, and you willingly acknowledge it.

Then came the Champion: that is to say, Christ was formed in you, "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). You heard of Him and you understood the truth about Him. And it seemed a wonderful thing that He should be your Substitute and stand in your room and place and stead, and bear your sin and all its curse and punishment, and that He should give His righteousness, yea, and His very Self to you, that you might be saved. Ah, then you saw how sin could be overthrown, did you not? As soon as your heart understood Christ, then you saw that what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ was able to accomplish. And that the power of sin and Satan under which you had been in bondage, and which you now loathed, could and would be broken and destroyed because Christ had come into the world to overcome it.

Next, do you recollect how you were led to see the bruising of Christ's heel and to stand in wonder and observe what the enmity of the serpent had wrought in Him? Did you not begin to feel the bruised heel yourself? Did not sin torment you? Did not the very thought of it vex you? Did not your own heart become a plague to you? Did not Satan begin to tempt you? Did he not inject blasphemous thoughts, and urge you on to desperate measures? Did he not teach you to doubt the existence of God, and the mercy of God, and the possibility of your salvation, and so on? This was his nibbling at your heel. He is at his old tricks still. He worries whom he can't devour with a malicious joy. Did not your worldly friends begin to annoy you? Did they not give you the cold shoulder because they saw something about you so strange and foreign to their tastes? Did they not impute your conduct to fanaticism, pride, obstinacy, bigotry, and the like? Ah, this persecution is the serpent's seed beginning to discover the woman's seed, and to carry on the old war. What does Paul say? "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now" (Gal 4:29). True godliness is an unnatural and strange thing to them, and they cannot away with it. Though there are no stakes in Smithfield, nor racks in the Tower, yet the enmity of the human heart towards Christ and His seed is just the same, and very often shows itself in trials of "cruel mockings" (Heb 11:36) which to the tender hearts are very hard to bear. Well, this is

your heel being bruised in sympathy with the bruising of the heel of the glorious Seed of the woman.

But, brethren, do you know something of the other fact, namely, that we conquer, for the serpent's head is broken in us? How, say you? Is not the power and dominion of sin broken in you? Do you not feel that you cannot sin because you are born of God? Some sins, which were masters of you once, do not trouble you now. I have known a man guilty of profane swearing, and from the moment of his conversion he has never had any difficulty in the matter. We have known a man snatched from drunkenness, and the cure by divine grace has been very wonderful and complete. We have known persons delivered from unclean living, and they have at once become chaste and pure, because Christ has smitten the old dragon such blows that he could not have power over them in that respect. The chosen seed sin, and mourn it, but they are not slaves to sin; their heart goeth not after it. They have to say sometimes "the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom 7:19), but they are wretched when it is so. They consent with their heart to the Law of God that it is good, and they sigh and cry that they may be helped to obey it, for they are no longer under the slavery of sin; the serpent's reigning power and dominion is broken in them.

It is broken next in this way—that the guilt of sin is gone. The great power of the serpent lies in unpardoned sin. He cries "I have made you guilty: I brought you under the curse." "No," say we, "we are delivered from the curse and are now blessed, for it is written, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered' (Psa 32:1). We are no longer guilty, for "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom 8:33). Since Christ hath justified, "Who is he that condemneth?" (vs. 34). Here is a swinging blow for the old dragon's head, such as he never will recover.

Oftentimes the Lord also grants us to know what it is to overcome temptation, and so to break the head of the fiend, Satan allures us with many baits. He has studied our points well; he knows the weakness of the flesh. But many and many a time, blessed be God, we have foiled him completely to his eternal shame! The devil must have felt himself mean³ that day when he tried to overthrow Job, dragged him down to a dunghill, robbed him of everything, covered him with sores, and yet could not make him yield. Job conquered when he cried, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). A feeble man had vanquished a devil who could raise the wind and blow down a house, and destroy the family who were feasting in it. Devil as he is, and crowned prince of the power of the air, yet the poor bereaved patriarch sitting on the dunghill covered with sores, being one of the woman's seed, through the strength of the inner life won the victory over him.

*"Ye sons of God oppose his rage,
Resist, and he'll be gone:
Thus did our dearest Lord engage
And vanquish him alone."*

³ **mean** – of little importance; poor; inferior.

Moreover, dear brethren, we have this hope that the very being of sin in us will be destroyed. The day will come when we shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And we shall stand before the Throne of God, having suffered no injury whatever from the fall and from all the machinations of Satan, for “they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14:5). What triumph that will be! “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20). When He has made you perfect and free from all sin, as He will do, you will have bruised the serpent’s head indeed.

And your resurrection, too, when Satan shall see you come up from the grave like one that has been perfumed in a bath of spices, when he shall see you arise in the image of Christ, with the same body which was sown in corruption and weakness raised in incorruption and power, then will he feel an infinite chagrin, and know that his head is bruised by the woman’s seed.

I ought to add that every time any one of us is made useful in saving souls, we do, as it were, repeat the bruising of the serpent’s head. When you go, dear sister, among those poor children, and pick them up from the gutters, where they are Satan’s prey, where he finds the raw material for thieves and criminals—and when through your means, by the grace of God, the little wanderers become children of the living God—then you in your measure bruise the old serpent’s head. I pray you do not spare him. When we, by preaching the gospel, turn sinners from the error of their ways, so that they escape from the power of darkness, again we bruise the serpent’s head. Whenever in any shape of way, you are blessed to the aiding of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, you, too, who were once beneath his power, and even now have sometimes to suffer from his nibbling at your heel, you tread upon his head. In all deliverances and victories you overcome, and prove the promise true—“Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name” (Psa 91:13-14).

III. The Encouragement

Let us speak awhile upon *the encouragement* which our text and the context yields to us; for it seems to me to abound.

I want you, brethren, to exercise faith in the promise and be comforted. The text evidently encouraged Adam very much. I do not think we have attached enough importance to the conduct of Adam after the Lord had spoken to him. Notice the simple but conclusive proof which he gave of his faith. Sometimes an action may be very small and unimportant, and yet, as a straw shows which way the wind blows, it may display at once, if it be thought over, the whole state of the man’s mind. Adam acted in faith upon what God had said, for we read, “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve (or Life); because she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). She was not a mother at all, but as the life was to come through her by virtue of the promised seed, Adam marks his full conviction of the truth of the promise though at the time the woman had borne no children. There stood

Adam, fresh from the awful presence of God, what more could he say? He might have said with the prophet, “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee” (Psa 119:120), but even then he turns round to his fellow-culprit as she stands there trembling too, and he calls her Eve, mother of the life that is yet to be. It was grandly spoken by Father Adam: it makes him rise in our esteem. Had he been left to himself he would have murmured or at least despaired; but no, his faith in the new promise gave him hope. He uttered no word of repining⁴ against the condemnation to till with toil the unthankful ground; nor on Eve’s part was there a word of repining over the appointed sorrows of motherhood. They each accept the well-deserved sentence with the silence which denotes the perfection of their resignation; their only word is full of simple faith. There was no child on whom to set their hopes, nor would the true Seed be born for an age, still Eve is to be the mother of all the living, and he calls her so. Exercise like faith, my brother, on the far wider revelation which God has given to you, and always extract the utmost comfort from it. Make a point, whenever you receive a promise from God, to get all you can out of it: if you carry out that rule, it is wonderful what comfort you will gain. Some go on the principle of getting as little as possible out of God’s Word. I believe that such a plan is the proper way with a man’s word; always understand it at the minimum, because that is what he means; but God’s Word is to be understood at the maximum, for He will do exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think.

Notice by way of further encouragement that we may regard our reception of Christ’s righteousness as an installment of the final overthrow of the devil. The twenty-first verse [of Genesis 3] says, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” A very condescending, thoughtful, and instructive deed of divine love! God heard what Adam said to his wife, and saw that he was a believer, and so He comes and gives him the type of the perfect righteousness, which is the believer’s portion—He covered him with lasting raiment. No more fig leaves, which were a mere mockery, but a close fitting garment which had been procured through the death of a victim. The Lord brings that and puts it on him, and Adam could no more say, “I am naked.” How could he, for God had clothed him. Now, beloved, let us take out of the promise that is given us concerning our Lord’s conquest over the devil this one item and rejoice in it. For Christ has delivered us from the power of the serpent who opened our eyes and told us we were naked, by covering us from head to foot with a righteousness which adorns and protects us, so that we are comfortable in heart, and beautiful in the sight of God, and are no more ashamed.

Next, by way of encouragement in pursuing the Christian life, I would say to young people, expect to be assailed. If you have fallen into trouble through being a Christian, be encouraged by it; do not at all regret or fear it, but rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for this is the constant token of the covenant. There is enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent still, and if you did not experience any of it you might begin to fear that you were on the wrong side. Now that you smart under the sneer of

⁴ **repining** – expressing discontent or unhappiness; complaining.

sarcasm and oppression, rejoice and triumph, for now are ye partakers with the glorious Seed of the woman in the bruising of His heel.

Still further encouragement comes from this. Your suffering as a Christian is not brought upon you for your own sake; ye are partners with the great Seed of the woman, ye are confederates with Christ. You must not think the devil cares much about you: the battle is against Christ in you. If you were not in Christ, the devil would never trouble you. When you were without Christ in the world you might have sinned as you liked. Your relatives and work-mates would not have been at all grieved with you; they would rather have joined you in it, but now the serpent's seed hates Christ in you. This exalts the sufferings of persecution to a position far above all common afflictions. I have heard of a woman who was condemned to death in the Marian days, and before her time came to be burned a child was born to her, and she cried out in her sorrow. A wicked adversary, who stood by said, "How will you bear to die for your religion if you make such ado?" "Ah," she said, "Now I suffer in my own person as a woman, but then I shall not suffer, but Christ in me." Nor were these idle words, for she bore her martyrdom with exemplary patience, and rose in her chariot of fire in holy triumph to heaven. If Christ be in you, nothing will dismay you, but you will overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil by faith.

Last of all, let us resist the devil always with this belief that he has received a broken head. I am inclined to think that Luther's way of laughing at the devil was a very good one, for he is worthy of shame and everlasting contempt. Luther once threw an inkstand at his head when he was tempting him very sorely, and though the act itself appears absurd enough, yet it was a true type of what that greater reformer was all his life long, for the books he wrote were truly a flinging of the inkstand at the head of the fiend. That is what we have to do; we are to resist him by all means. Let us do this bravely, and tell him to his teeth that we are not afraid of him. Tell him to recollect his bruised head, which he tries to cover with a crown of pride, or with a popish cowl, or with an infidel doctor's hood. We know him, and see the deadly wound he bears. His power is gone; he is fighting a lost battle; he is contending against Omnipotence. He has set himself against the oath of the Father; against the blood of the incarnate Son; against the eternal power and Godhead of the blessed Spirit, all of which are engaged in the defense of the seed of the woman in the day of battle. Therefore, brethren, be ye steadfast in resisting the evil one, being strong in faith, giving glory to God.



*'Tis by Thy blood, immortal Lamb,
Thine armies tread the tempter down;
'Tis by Thy word and powerful name
They gain the battle and renown.*

*Rejoice ye heavens; let every star
Shine with new glories round the sky;
Saints, while ye sing the heavenly war,
Raise your Deliverer's Name on high.*