

With the Preacher's compliments

*"The Glorious Gospel of the Blessed
God."*

A SERMON

Preached by the

REV. E. DIGGES LA TOUCHE, B.A., Curate,

On the commencement of his ministry in

S. Mark's Parish Church, Eldon,

On Sunday Morning, 29th September, 1907.

The Lord, he is the God; the Lord he is the God.—
1 Kings, xviii, 39.

*God is love.—*1 John iv, 8.

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.

According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.—*1 Tim. i, 9-12.

It is a solemn thing, my brethren, to stand before you clad with all the dread authority of a minister of Christ, and to preach the word of God to you, not only as in the previous weeks of my ministry as a servant of Jehovah called to the ministry, but as the ambassador of Christ, whose credentials have been certified as true by the Historic Church of God acting through its chosen and consecrated representative and overseer. And it is, with heartfelt joy and fear, that I now say to you in the words of the greatest and the least of the Apostles, in words

which are at once a request and a command. Brethren pray for us. This is a request and an entreaty because your preacher is deeply conscious of his own utter inability to do of himself anything that is good, to think anything that is pure, to say anything that is holy, were it not that his dependence is on that Higher Power by whose free unmerited grace he is what he is, by whose inscrutable Providence he has been pardoned and regenerated despite his bitter resistance to the marvellous love of God, by whose gracious mercy and love he has been honoured with a more illustrious commission than any earthly king can give—that of an ambassador of Christ. “Brethren, pray for us.” This is also a command—couched in the language of authority for its words are words of the Holy Ghost spoken by his servant of old to his Church that it should pray for its ministers, its servants, its slaves, who exist for its good, that they may mightily bless and be blessed in the administration of God’s word and sacraments.

“Brethren, pray for us,” that a closer walk with God, that a truer love of prayer and communion with Him, that a greater appropriation of the benefits of Union with Christ, may be the daily experience of your Curate, and form the foundation of his preaching; that courage may be given him to preach boldly the truth as it is in Jesus, without taking from it or adding to it, that wisdom may be given him to preach the truth wisely, rightly dividing the Word of truth and that the word may not return unto God void, but that it may accomplish that whereunto He hath sent it—whether as a savour of life unto life or as a savour of death unto death. Above all, “Brethren, pray for us,” that the life may be fashioned as our Master would have it, that the inconsistencies and sins of your Curate—and God knows I cry for mercy and strength—may not be a stone of offence to any of his brethren; and that his daily life may be a closer walk with God hour by hour, for so alone will the preached word be effectual to the saving of souls and the confirming of the saints.

There can be but little doubt in your minds, after the many sermons I have preached as to what my convictions are—for I have not hesitated to declare myself a convinced evangelical Churchman who glories in the truths for which Latimer and

Ridley died, Sibbes and the Puritans suffered, preached by the Revivalists of Cent. XVIII, and in whose blessed comfort, the noblest and best of the sons of the nineteenth century have lived and died. But to day, on this occasion when I speak for the first time with all the dread authority of a minister of Christ, I desire to state more clearly than I have yet done, the truths that seem to me the fundamental ideas of “the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God.”

I. *To do so, we must first speak of our doctrine of God—* for any theology which is centred in aught else than God is mean and poor, and any Gospel which finds its fundamental doctrine in any other fact than the paternal Sovereignty of God is an inglorious and vitiated Gospel, lacking in the most vital elements taught by the Word. God is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. Infidelity tells us that the world came about by chance. It explains the existence of the Universe much as the little ignorant slave girl Topsy in “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” explained hers who, being told by Miss Ophelia that she must have had a father and mother, stoutly denied it saying “never had none, I spex I growed.” To this Christianity gives an explicit denial. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” gives the keynote of revelation just as surely as they are the first phrases of the Word of God. Further, Christianity asserts that God is clearly revealed in His works for, says St. Paul, “God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made even His eternal power and divinity.” And this claim of Christianity is confirmed by the teaching of the most advanced and ablest scientists of the age, for Lord Kelvin declares that Science demands a Creator. Thirty years ago good men trembled lest science should dethrone religion; to-day science has learned her own insufficiency to explain the origin of the Universe, and her most illustrious votaries sit at the feet of the Son of God. Why? Let the Psalmist answer in words which have rung throughout the ages—too often unheeded by the hearers—“The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” But Christian-

ity is the revelation of a God immanent in His creation—whose sacred presence is everywhere. “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, Thou art there.” God is everywhere. We believe in “One God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all.” He is here. Withdraw Him and this building disappears, for matter is God’s frozen thought. God is in this church, in this pulpit, in this book, in His preacher, in you. Without Him there is no existence, for “in Him we live and move and have our being.”

Further, Christianity proclaims the absolute Sovereignty of God. He is the Creator of all and the Disposer of all; that His disposal of all will be merciful and loving is certain, for His character is Holy Love. “God is Love.” God is not subject to creature limitations and the attempt to so limit Him is equally blasphemous and absurd. Hath God not a right to do as He likes with His own? Hath He not a right to prescribe just and holy laws and to punish their violation? The Christianity of the English Church as expressed in her confessions explicitly proclaims the truth that “the Lord He is the God, the Lord He is God,” without presumptuous limitation of His power or actions.

II. *But into the creation of God an abnormal factor has been intruded.* That sin is permitted of God for some beneficent purpose is the faith of the Church of God, as is the further truth that sin is absolutely evil, absolutely unclean, absolutely opposed to God and absolutely deserving and receiving the wrath of God. Sin is an absolute corruption of the whole nature so that the sinner hates and loathes his God, abhors that which is good and cleaves to that which is evil. As Article IX warns us “Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil so that the flesh always lusteth contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” In other words, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” and are therefore

under sentence of death and of eternal punishment. The grey-beard who has lived all his days in honour and the reprobate dying of his own uncleanness are alike under the sentence of the wrath of God. The infant in its mother’s arms, the purest of women and the harlot are alike under the curse of death and damnation—cursed because of sin for all die.

Neither can they escape the penalty of sin by their good works for “it is impossible without faith to please Him.” The corruption of our nature means the corruption of all our works—as Article XII tells us “Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ...; yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not that they have the nature of sin.” Is not this true in experience—that our motive is always imperfect and unholy? Is it not true that we continuously violate the law of God? Well may we as we mentally review our lives cry with the Psalmist “If thou Lord shouldest mark iniquities O Lord, who shall stand?”—Ps. cxxxiii. What is the result of sin with regard to the sinner’s relationship to his Sovereign God? St. Paul tells us that “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Have you, has any man save Christ, continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them? Cursed, hated of God, is everyone.

A Sovereign cannot permit the violation of his laws without the legalising of lawlessness and the consequent denial of his majesty. If this is so with an earthly king, how infinitely more is it the case with the King of Kings! It is a misdemeanour to strike a subject in the face, it is treason—felony to strike the king, since the gravity of an offence is enhanced by the dignity of him who is offended. Consider the majesty of God, of the one eternally existing being, by whose word the whole Universe came into being, at whose nod the whole would pass away. Regard the dignity of the Sustainer of all “in whom we live and move and have our being,” the giver of life, the absolute intelligence,

the Sovereign God and ask yourself whether a sin against the infinite is not an infinite sin and as such deserving an infinite punishment? Of a surety God is the absolute Sovereign and Punisher of Sin—if He were not, He would no longer be perfect. Let Ruskin be our teacher. He tells us that “there are dark rays, indigo, blue and violet, which equally with the bright ones are constituents of the light and render it that exquisite, delicate, and beautiful and enjoyable thing which it is; even so the Divine character has its sterner and more sombre, as well as its brighter and more attractive attributes.” We have already seen that man can do nothing towards the expiation of his sin for his acts, his words, yea, even his very thoughts, are evil and therefore absolutely hateful to his God.

III. *Is there a remedy provided?* Yes, blessed be God, there is: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” God’s love provided a remedy, which, more than any words, shows forth the sinfulness of sin as the good Puritan Bishop Reynolds describes it, for that remedy was none other than the death of His dear Son by the hands of wicked men, for “He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Let His own blessed words be our guide. “The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.” Of Him the words of His ancient Seer, spoken long centuries before, are literally true. “He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.” He, the sinbearer, bore the burden of a world’s guilt, He quivered under the lashes of God’s wrath in our stead, and now we are redeemed not with corruptible things but with incorruptible, even the precious blood of Christ. As Articles XXXI tells us “The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone.”

Jehovah, bade his sword awake;
 O Christ, it woke 'gainst Thee!
 Thy blood the flaming blade must slake
 Thy heart its sheath must be,
 All for my sake my peace to make
 Now sleeps that sword for me.

IV. *How is this remedy to be applied?* The answer which can alone bring peace to the weary sin-sick soul is the answer, given by Paul, proclaimed by Augustine, declared by Calvin, for which the fathers of the English Church suffered at the stake—justification by faith and faith alone. Faith is the link which binds us to the throne of grace; trust is the means whereby we take as our own the benefits obtained for us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What He has done, we have done in God’s sight if there is what Flavel calls a “strict and dear union betwixt” us and Christ. If we are united with Him, His merits are counted as our merits and our sins as His sins, our will is subordinated to His will so that we no longer live but Christ lives in us. This is the blessed doctrine of justification by faith, that faith is the instrument whereby we are made partakers of the gospel feast.

Further, saving faith is the gift of God. “By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God.” We have already seen man’s abhorrence of God and holiness resulting from his spiritual death and breach of communion with God. Hence it is impossible for man of himself to exercise true faith for he cannot even will to do any good thing since his nature is hopelessly corrupt. As Article X teaches us “the condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God.” Hence it comes that God is the final arbiter of the eternal destiny of man for “he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth.” The words of the Lord Jesus proclaim this doctrine with more explicit definiteness than any earthly formulary for He said “no man can come unto Me except the Father draw him.” Such is our faith that “we are accounted righteous before God, only

for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." Article XI, though this same Lord and Saviour laments in agonised sorrow that "ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life:" for no man is lost save by his own fault, for God has provided a sufficient remedy for all sinners if only they would accept it for said the Lord of Glory "him that cometh unto Me I will not, yea I will not, cast him out.

V. *For those whom God hath chosen in Christ there remains a glorious destiny for "there remaineth a rest for the people of God."* After this weary life ended, their battle done, their victory won, after they have passed dry shod over the river of death their dear Lord standing in the midst, as the people of Israel passed over Jordan dry shod, when the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant stood in the midst they come to that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." They pass through this life in sorrow as pilgrims and sojourners for they have no part in the God of this world or his kingdoms of lust, ungodliness and crime; ever yearning for the accomplishment of their warfare, the ending of their travail, they look to heaven for their solace and joy, for their "citizenship is in heaven," they await the dawning of the eternal day, for they know in whom they have believed and that He is able to keep them against that day. They await in the certitude of faith, the coming of the new Jerusalem, the city of God, adorned as a bride for her husband. They fear not the battlefield of life for they know that after the noise of battle is over, and the smoke clears away, their eyes shall see the King in his beauty—yea, blessed are those pure hearted ones for they shall see God—when the strife is done, rest awaits them in the joy of their Lord, for "their rest shall be glorious." Such their rest, such their hope, such their faith, God grant it may in full assurance be ours!

Is this gospel an immoral gospel? Some ignorantly say it is. Our legitimate appeal is to the pages of history. What nation, what race maintains its place in the world's history which has rejected this glorious gospel? We look to Holland and we find her downtrodden and oppressed by the power of Spain. The

spread of the reformed religion is accompanied by a revival of national spirit; led by one whose hero-heart was filled with the truths of this blessed gospel, Holland became a free country destined to take an honourable place amid the nations of the earth. We find England a mean nation amid the nations of Europe. She accepts this gospel and to-day she is, in the providence of God, the suzerain of the mightiest Empire upon earth. We regard her history and we find that the weakening of this doctrine's hold upon her people has always been accompanied by ungodliness and uncleanness of life, and that its revival has been the sole means of reformation. We also find the noblest, the truest, the most heroic of her sons—the Latimers and Riddleys, the Ushers, the Cromwells and the Falklands, the Whitefields and the Rowlands and last but not least the Patons and the Moules—imbued with the teaching of this "glorious gospel of the blessed God."

Such is the gospel committed to my trust, not by man but by God. Such is the gospel handed on to me from the earliest ages of the Church of God to hand on to you. Such is the message I have been solemnly commissioned by the Church of God to deliver.

Is it needful that I again ask your prayers? Is it unreasonable that I plead with you for Christ's sake to remember me daily in your prayers that I may deliver this message faithfully and lovingly?

Is this old gospel too narrow? Yes, it is—for those who make God such a one as themselves, who desire to probe the problems of the infinite with finite thought, who think to sound the depths of the counsels of the infinite God with the short line of a finite human brain.

Is this gospel of the Cross a narrow gospel? No, it is not. The gospel invitation rings far and wide "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"—the message is to all. The weary sin-sick soul has only to come to the good Physician to be cured of every ill. In Him is plentiful redemption. In Him your preacher and some of you have found a peace which is beyond all earthly words, in Him they

have a joy and a knowledge beside which all earthly knowledge, and all earthly joy pale into insignificance.

May I, on this first occasion of my public ministry, give my deliberate testimony to the glorious gospel of the blessed God as I have found it in my own experience of well nigh fifteen years, in well weighed and cautiously chosen words? All that I have, now, or in the future, is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Without Him I have naught of any value. In Him are my peace, my joy, my earthly affections grounded. While I have Him, no earthly sorrow can prostrate me; if grief comes, I know it is of His love, if joy I know it is of His mercy, if work to Him I look for power. Take Him away and I have nothing left. It were a deplorable thing to be a blind deaf mute; but I deliberately say that I would rather—infinity rather—lose every means of communication with the outdoor world, than lose communion with my God. Take my bodily powers from me, and you leave me the Gospel hope, of a day when the blind eyes shall be opened, when the eyes which here looked unseeing on the Universe of God “shall see the King in His beauty;” when the deaf ears, here irresponsible to the tones of earthly love, shall hear the blessed words “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;” when the mute tongue here unable to perform its allotted functions shall make the very courts of heaven resound again and again with the praise of Him who died for me. Take away the gospel, and you leave me helpless and hopeless, without God and without hope in the world.

Such is the blessed gospel, which all of you may have if only you will take it.

For the love of God is broader,
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

“In the last day of the Feast Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of him shall flow rivers of living water.” Come.