

GOSPEL SERMONS

as

Sam P. Jones

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SERMON SIX

EVERY-DAY RELIGION

We invite your attention to the text, to be found in the third chapter and ninth verse of the first epistle general of John.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he can not sin, because he is born of God.”

You say, “Strange text for a Thanksgiving sermon.” Well, let's wait awhile and see what this text has to do with this occasion and with the future of our lives. I might stop here and say: This one verse of Scripture gave me more pain and trouble for seven or eight years of my religious life than perhaps any other and all other passages of the word of God. This text to me once was a two-edged sword, and I never approached it that I didn't feel its sharp blades cutting asunder the very joint and marrow and soul and spirit.

To a great many, the reading of this text is nothing more than the applying of the sound, but to others and to me, while this text was once a two-edged sword, now it is the sweetest bread Heaven ever gave me. I announce at this point that I don't propose to preach on sanctification. I don't expect to touch any controversial point, any controverted dogmas and views. I am going to preach on old-fashioned righteousness and the life of the really converted man. I'm going to preach on every -day religion.

I shall not get up as high as sanctification, though I believe in it with all my heart, and I believe that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and if you ask me why I believe that, I tell you just because the Bible says so, and I don't want any better reason for anything than that “God says.”

A SCRIPTURAL CLIMAX

Now, this text is the climax of that preceding, and we can only reach this great climatical point as we may come up through the context. And may God help me to preach this text to-day. I would rather partially fail on this text than succeed on many other texts on the word of God. A clear exegesis, a scriptural understanding of this text to-day, must benefit every man here, and every woman here, whether you profess to be Christians or not. And now I turn to the context, beginning with the first verse, and I read this:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth it not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear.”

The first announcement of the text is the princely character of the Christian man. **“Now are we the sons of God.”**

What a blessed realization this is to poor, weak humanity. And, thank God! The sentiment of the song is but the truth of God's words when we sing:

I'm a child of the King,
My father is rich in houses and lands.

Every Christian man must realize, first, I am a son of the Lord God Almighty. He is my father. I am his child. It is worth a great deal to a man, brother, to know and be conscious of the fact that he belongs to a noble family. It is worth a great deal to any man to know that the blood which courses through his veins is as pure and good as ever flowed through human veins. It is worth a good deal to a boy to know that his father was a princely good man. It is worth a great deal to a boy to look back with the consciousness, “My mother was one of the purest women that ever lived.”

In fact, many a boy has drifted to the very verge of destruction in his waywardness and dissipation, and in some thoughtful moment a kind friend has approached him and laid his hand on his shoulder and said: “My friend! Young man! Why will you dissipate and why will you go so far in sin? My precious young man, your mother was one of the most princely women I ever knew. Your father was a noble Christian man.”

And the boy has walked off alone and buried his face in his hands and wept like a child as he said: “My mother was one of the purest women earth ever knew. My father was a noble, princely man. And to-day I reform my life and serve my mother's God and follow my father's Christ.”

THE MISSISSIPPI AGNOSTIC

I once knew a man in the State of Mississippi; he was an elegant man, some fifty years old, an elegant, cultured gentleman. He was what we call an agnostic, or infidel. After the meeting had progressed several days he stood up one morning in the vast congregation and he said: “My fellow-citizens: I have roamed over all the range of science and literature. I have never found rest to my soul, and today my mind turns back to the purest, sweetest mother a boy ever had. My mind goes back to my precious father and the family altar and the sacred conversations at home, and I stand up to-day to confess my sins and give my life to Christ.”

Ah me! If we realize who we are, then that will help us to be what we ought to be. A certain one of the crowned heads of an Eastern country turned his son over to a tutor to train and educate. He was an unruly boy, some twelve years of age, and the great question of the tutor was: “How will I manage this boy? I cannot use a rod on the king's son. How am I to manage him!”

And, finally, he adopted this plan: He made a bow of ribbon and bound it on the lapel of the boy's coat. The boy turned to the tutor and said: "What does that mean?"

The tutor said: "That is the sign of your royal character. That is the sign that you are the son of a king. That is the emblem of your royal character." And ever after that when the boy misbehaved the teacher pointed his finger to the badge, and the boy subsided in a moment and begged pardon for his rudeness. And Paul says: "**I carry about with me the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ**", and when the good spirit of Christ drops his finger on the mark I stop all that is evil and weep my life away for having grieved God's love.

THE PRINCELY CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

Here Mr. Jones referred to the visit of Prince Edward of England to this country, to the wish expressed that while here he would behave himself as became his rank, and to the general verdict of approval of his conduct while in America, and said:

Now, I may not and cannot announce that I am the son of Queen Victoria of England, but, blessed be God! I am the son of Lord God Almighty, and I am heir apparent to all things. And when I walk out before the world, and make the declaration, the world greets me, and replies: "Now we expect something of you. We want you to talk like a prince, to give like a prince, to act as a prince, to go where princes ought to go, and stay away from where princes ought not to go. We want you to behave as a worthy member of the family to which you belong," and, brethren, the highest aim of a Christian's heart is to worthily magnify the name of the family to which he belongs, and oh, how it ought to be the chief desire of all Christian hearts never to bring reproach or shame upon the name of the family of God. One of the purest of men, your noble bishop, who died in your midst, in one of his sermons, said this: "Shortly after I joined the church," he said, "I was riding along, when this thought impressed me: 'I am now a member of the Church of Christ, and I have it in my power to bring reproach and shame upon the name and cause of Christ.'"

Said he, "When that thought possessed me, it overwhelmed me. Oh, what a fearful power delegated to mortal man! Power to bring reproach and shame upon the cause of Christ And," said he, "the prayer that I lifted up from my heart, was, 'God help me to die rather than bring a pain upon the family of God and the name of Christ.'"

When you walk out before the world with this announcement made: "I am the child of the king. I am heir apparent to all things," the world doffs its hat, and says to you: "We expect you to live like one," and I am very glad this world will not compromise Christian people down to the point where they will willingly let us do like they do. I am glad that no wicked man every sees a professing Christian doing anything wrong that he doesn't point the finger of scorn at him, and say: "Just look at that professing Christian. He dishonors his God, and disgraces himself."

I say I am glad the world thinks more of Christ, and thinks more of Christianity, than to let us Christian people misrepresent the gospel, and misrepresent Christ, without throwing it in our teeth, and telling us to our face: "We believe you are hypocrites." I am glad of that

A MERCIFUL DIVINE FATHER

And then after a profession like this it behooves us to be grateful for the redeeming mercy and condescending grace that would adopt us into the heavenly family. It behooves as then to lead a pure life and stainless character before God and men.

“Now are we the sons of God.”

It isn't by and by. It isn't when I am bidding earth and friends goodbye, and pluming myself for flight to glory and God, but it is down in the world of temptation and trial. Every morning, noon and night, I may fall on my knees and say, **“My Father, which art in Heaven.”** I can explain my existence on no other hypothesis than that God is my Father.

I was getting on a railroad train some months ago in my State, and a gentleman boarded the train at one of the stations, and after shaking hands and talking a moment I asked him the news.

“Well,” he said, “nothing special I believe, except I came very near being killed last night.”

Said I, “How was that?”

Said he, “the agent at the depot in our town was lying on the platform of the depot, drunk. He had been drunk several days. I went up to him to help him into the depot, and when I did so he jerked out his pistol and shot at me twice, and came very near hitting me.”

“Well,” said I, “do you mean to say that the agent at the depot in your town had been drunk for several days?”

“Why,” said I, “the officers of this road are very strict with their employees. How is it this man maintains his position if he drinks that way?”

Said the gentleman, “I can't tell you, sir, only this man, this agent, is brother-in-law to the president of the road.”

Well, when he said that, I saw it all in a moment, and then I said to myself: “How is it God puts up with me as he does?” “How is it God has borne with me as he has?” And I found the answer is this: Not because God was my brother-in-law, but because God was my father; and isn't it astonishing how God will bear with his children?

A LESSON FROM THE NURSE GIRL

I learned a great lesson in my relations toward God in a little incident that happened at my own home. We had in our employ a girl nursing for us. She was rather a careless, indifferent servant. I was sitting in the room one morning just after breakfast and this girl walked in and my wife said: “Sally, you can go to your home this morning, and tell your mother to come over after awhile and I will pay your wages to her. I don't want you any longer, Sally, you may go.”

I looked up from my book and the girl stood there, full face toward my wife, and the tears commenced running down her cheek, and directly she turned to my wife and she says: "Mrs. Jones, please ma'am, don't turn me off. I know I'm the poorest servant you ever had, but I don't want to be turned off. Please ma'am, keep me."

I commenced to beg for the poor girl, and said: "Wife, bear with her a little while longer."

And then I thought to myself: "If the Lord Jesus were to come down this morning and discharge me and tell me, 'I don't want you any longer,' I would fall down at his feet and say: 'Blessed Saviour, don't turn me off. I know I am the poorest servant you ever had, but, blessed Christ, keep me in thy life employ.'"

Oh, blessed Christ! So good to us! So merciful to us! Ah, brother:

When all thy mercies, oh, my Lord,
My rising soul surreys.
Transported by the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise.

Oh, after love like this,
Let rocks and hills their silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Saviour's praises speak.

"Herein is love; not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and gave His own Son to die for us."

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," that every child of Heaven might be adopted into the heavenly family and become an heir of immortal life. Ah, sister, look up to-day, and see your father's face as it shines in beauty and love and mercy, and say: "Abba! Father! My Lord and my God!" And then realizing your princely character ever after this,

Let your life and lips express
The holy Gospel you profess.

PURITY OF CHARACTER

And then I turn to the second feature of the text, and I read it this way:

"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 he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as Christ is pure."

The Christian character is pure. There is a great deal amid about life purity and heart purity in the Word of God. The Christian is pure in his life and pure in his character.

The Book says:

“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

A guileless man! A guileless woman! A guileless husband! A guileless wife! A guileless child! A purity like the character of the little ermine, that beautiful, fastidious little animal, with its hair and skin almost as white as the driven snow, and the only way to capture it with its cunning, is to mark its course from its home, and then sprinkle mud and dirt along its pathway, and when the little ermine reaches in its pathway to where the muddy water and dirt are placed, it will lie down and subject itself to capture and death before it will smirch or soil one of its snow-white hairs.

And so the true Christian has reached his highest aims when he reaches a point where he will lie down and subject himself to torture and death before he will smirch his character as a Christian man. That's the Christian character — princely in nature and pure in character.

THESE DELIVERANCES

Brethren, sooner or later we must meet this point, that God's people are a peculiar people and God's people are a pure people. Sooner or later we must meet this in our convictions, in our intelligent thought; and I say to you all to-day that there is no theological book in any theological library in the country, Protestant in its character, that puts salvation this side of these three principles.

Salvation, says all Protestant theology, is deliverance from the guilt of sin; deliverance from the love of sin, and deliverance from the dominion of sin. And I declare to you to-day that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is either adequate to reach the depths of human depravity, or we misunderstand that Gospel.

I am ready to take this position and defy earth and hell equally upon it. Jesus is able to do for me and you - all that we need to have done, and if that is true, then God knows I need to be delivered from sin, its dominion, its love and its guilt. Now, when I am delivered from the guilt of sin, I have got to that point in the Christian life reached by Bunyan's pilgrim when he walks to the cross, and the burden rolls from his conscience, and he stands upright before God. But, brother, that is not sufficient. The mere pardoning power that would leave me as I was doesn't amount to much. I not only want to be pardoned for my past sins, but I want to be cleansed from all unrighteousness.

In every thought renewed
And full of life divine,
Perfect and right and pure and good.
Lord keep me ever thine.

If I had but one prayer between this and eternity, I would pour out my soul in this one petition: “God, give me a pure heart and pure life — the purity of Christian character.”

THE LOATHING OF SIN

I don't consider any man safe here or hereafter until he is delivered from the love of those things that are wrong. There is no attitude toward God that is acceptable to Him except the attitude that turns with loathing away from sin.

Let me illustrate what I mean: Here's a mother sitting quietly within her room. Her only child; little Willie, just four years old, and the pride of her heart and the joy of her life, sees mamma's little pearl-handled pen-knife lying on the table.

That little knife is the present of a friend, and mother values it highly. Little Willie, unknown to mother, picks up the little knife and runs out of the room, and in an hour mother wonders where he is, and directly the nurse comes in hurriedly and says: "Little Willie is lying all bloody in the front flower yard," and mother rushes out there, and there is little Willie just gasping and breathing his last. He stubbed his little foot and fell and the blade pierced the jugular vein.

The mother grabs the little bloody angel in her arms and runs into the room and just as she lays him on the little bed he breathes his last, and the mother kisses her child and says: "Sweet Willie, just speak one more time."

Next day, mother carries little Willie to the grave and buries him and comes back to her home with broken heart, and as she sits down and turns back the dark veil, the nurse comes out of the front yard and says: "Madam, here's the little knife. Here's your little pearl-handled knife."

The mother looks at the knife and its blade all covered with the blood of her sweet child, and she shrinks back in horror and says, "Take that knife out of my presence. I never want to see it again. It has the blood of my precious child upon it."

And when a Christian man or woman, under the light of God's Holy Spirit, can see that every sin in all the moral universe of God has been covered with the blood of the Son of God, then he shrinks back in horror and says: "Oh! Take it out of my presence. It is covered with the precious blood of my bleeding Saviour." Oh, brother, you will never know what piety is until you see all impurity bathed in the blood of the Son of God. Oh, let us hate sin and abhor it, and turn away from it and despise it utterly.

IMPERVIOUSNESS TO SIN

And now for a few moments:

"He that is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him and he can not sin because he is born of God."

We have had firstly, the princely character of the Christian, and, secondly, his purity of character, and now we come to the climax of the text, the imperviousness of the Christian character to sin.

Now, if I were to say right here that an honest man can not steal, everybody would say, "That is true." If I were to say a sober man cannot get drunk, they would say, "That's a fact" If I were to say a chaste man cannot be vulgar, they would say, "That is true." Well now, brother, if a truthful man as a truthful man cannot tell a lie, and an honest man as an honest man can not steal, and a sober man as a sober man cannot get drunk, if logic is worth anything and common sense and religion will mix up together at all, then I say, is there anything unreasonable in the proposition that:

"He that is born of God doth not commit sin."

Don't you see?

"He that is born of God doth not commit sin, because His seed remaineth in him."

Now, there's the gist of the whole matter. There's the pivotal point in the whole text:

"Because His seed remaineth in him."

It is a moral "can't;" not a physical "can't" Now suppose some man had said to me this morning when I got up, "Brother Tudor came here last night and stole your watch and clothes, and has run away." I would look the man in the face and say, "Brother Tudor cannot steal my watch and clothes."

I don't mean that he could not have walked out on the street and gone into my room and carried off these things as a physical act, but I say, "It is against his principle and against his interest and against his conviction and against his desires and purposes and everything, and I just know he didn't do it."

There's a man with the love and respect of everybody in St Louis, and with no interest at all for stealing anything from me, and I just know he couldn't do it; and if every man in the city of St. Louis was like him, we could quit shutting our front doors at night and throw all our keys away, and just close up our sheriff's institution and every jail and calaboose in this city. Ain't that so? It is like a train when you see it going thundering along the track toward Kansas City; you know it isn't going to St. Louis because all its momentum is the other way. And when a man's momentum and desires and purposes and intentions are set Heavenward, with all the power that God can give him, then he can't go to Hell.

TOO FOND OF REAL ESTATE

Now you know that line you sing:

"Surely the Captain may depend on me."

How few of us the Lord can depend on, and how few can He trust with money? You hear men confessing every sin except that of avarice. I never heard of anything of that sort in the church, never.

There are men in this town, and, I expect some men in this house, that if God were to check on you to-day for \$100 or \$1,000 for some good cause, you would let that check go to protest, and swear you didn't have the money. And yet if you could go down here on a certain corner and buy a piece of property at 33 per cent discount, you would give a cash check for every dollar of it. And God keeps books and he'll put your sort in Hell by and by for lying, if you never do anything else wrong.

Mr. Jones' last illustration was that of a beautiful tract of river land, so covered with noble timber that it would be impossible to raise any other crop in their shade, and he said that where God's grace and the desire to live a right life filled a man's heart, there could be no room for the devil. Said he:

The idea of the divine spirit taking possession of our hearts means about this: My time and life and hands and feet and tongue all belong to God. I never intend to work for the devil. I have no time. Here's a fellow goes over to one of these ladies and says:

“Can you go to the theater with me to-night!”

"No."

"Why not?"

“Well, this is my night for visiting the sick.”

“Will you go to-morrow night?”

"No."

"Why?"

“Because to-morrow night is our Bible lesson night, when myself and children study the lesson for Sunday.”

"How about the night after that?"

“I can't go that night either. That's prayer meeting night, and I never miss prayer meeting.”

“Will you go the next night?”

“That's the night we meet at the church parlor to study the Sunday school lesson.”

“Well, now, when will you go?”

“I don't know any night I can give you in the next thousand years. I might fix up one a thousand years from now, but I haven't any night in a thousand years that I can give for that”

Don't you see? That lady has got where she's worth something to God and worth nothing to the devil.

Oh, Lord, give us that sort of religion all over this country. Amen.

REJOICING OVER A PROHIBITION VICTORY

The sermon proper concluded with the story of Job's trials and triumphs. After the announcements for the day, Mr. Jones read the following telegram:

Atlanta, Ga., November 26.— To Sam W. Small, St. Louis: *Hallelujah! It's done. Prohibition victorious by 232 majority in this city* (Tremendous applause).

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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