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SERMON,

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*Math. xxvi, 39.*—And he went a little farther, and fell upon his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

I KNOW of nothing better calculated to inspire us with suitable sentiments and affections on this occasion, than a thorough conviction that the events which these words record, did actually take place. It is not a fiction; these words perpetuate the memory of a fact.

On this occasion, our Lord has taught us that he was our brother. Every part of his conduct, announces to a desponding world, "I am bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh." Following the original and innocent predilections of our nature, our Lord on the night of his betrayal, when he had come with his eleven disciples to a garden called Gethsemane, at the entry of that garden he left eight of them, he there selected Peter and James and John, and with those chosen friends he retired from the rest of his disciples. Oh, what an homage is here paid to friendship? What a sanction to those best feelings of our nature, which though they flowed from a heart glowing with universal benevolence, yet know how to rest with peculiar delight upon a chosen friend, to repose with boundless confidence, in the darkest hour, upon yet more congenial spirits. Such is one lesson drawn from our Saviour's conduct on this occasion. With Peter, James and John, he retires from the other eight disciples, and in company with those chosen friends, "He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy. And he sayeth unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, unto death; tarry ye here and watch." Sacred as friendship is, it has its bounds. These

limits are not to be passed. Precious as was the society of Peter and James and John, to the bursting heart of the Saviour, much as we may suppose, he may have needed the cheering presence of his friends, during the darkest hour of the darkest night that ever lowered over our world; yet he has a duty to perform which is too solemn, and too awful to be witnessed by any human being. "And when he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, he fell upon his face and prayed, saying; O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Is this the Lord of the universe? Does this agonized being claim in his own proper person, and right the sovereignty of the world? Is he the former of that earth which his tears and his blood now moisten? While an angel is commissioned from heaven, and is seen strengthening his humanity; are all the angels of heaven commanded to worship him, as God over all, blessed forever more? Yes, O yes, these and a thousand such stupendous mysteries meet and mingle and shine in the "Immanuel, God with us."

Brethren, with the astonishing scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary full in view, we will ask ourselves this question: Why all this humiliation and suffering? An answer to the question is all we propose at this time.

Is God a tyrant? Does he delight in seeing and producing misery? Were his holy eyes pleased, while he beheld the blood bursting from every pore of the weltering, agonizing sufferer? Were his ears delighted when from the high throne of eternity, he heard his only begotten Son cry upon the cross, My G

my God, why hast thou forsaken me? It would be blasphemy against the Most High, to suppose it. "God is love," and never did the beneficence of his character shine forth so illustriously as when the dreadful mandate was obeyed. The ultimate object of God, was not to inflict pain causelessly, but to diminish misery; not to satiate a vengeful disposition, for there is none such in him; but to answer the temperate and indispensable demands of government and the rights of his law. "To declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Christ."

But Christ the sufferer was in himself innocent. The highest attestations had been borne by heaven itself to the dignity and immaculate purity of his character. Such attestations never had been given to man or angel. "And Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descending in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and yet he suffers. His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. The ploughs ploughed upon his back, they made long their furrows." All this in the face of heaven; all this under the government of a God who is bound by the law of his nature, and by his oath, to protect innocence, to shield and reward virtue and piety. Let the unhallowed lips that deny the proper vicarious sacrifice of Christ solve this enigma, reconcile this absurdity; a God of power, of justice, of benevolence, all infinite, not only suffering accumulated misery to light upon the head of immaculate innocence, but more, making the sufferer "a curse;" still more, in the hour of his utmost extremity, shrouding his own fatherly face with a frown that darkened the whole field of nature, that rived the innocent soul of the sufferer, extorted from his lips the memorable cry of the cross, and was the real efficient cause of his speedy death. Let the advocates of what is falsely called rational Christianity, say how these things took place. Denying the substitution of the Saviour, as all who deny his proper divinity must, they are compelled to say one of two things. Either that Christ was not a perfectly innocent being, or that God was unjust in permitting him to be made miserable. Which side of this dilemma will you take?

You are at liberty to select either you please. One of them you must take, or confess, "that he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. For the transgression of my people was he stricken." For Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

But the question returns upon us in another form, and is boldly pressed by the adversaries of the cross. They loudly demand, what is it that restrains the infinite benevolence of the Deity? Grant that the human family are as lost and depraved as you may please to make them; still is not God their maker and sovereign? Has not the legislator of the universe a right to give what dispensations against the severity of law, he pleases? And who shall be offended, or ask what dost thou? Has not the independent and eternal Jehovah, a right to astonish the universe, and elicit from the lips of every heavenly inhabitant a higher song of praise, by one grand display of *independent, absolute* benevolence, that shall incircle in his paternal bosom, every sanctified son of man? Such is the language of all who reject the blood of reconciliation. O! brethren, I tremble when I approach thus near the burning throne of eternity, though I humbly recognize the intercessor in his seat. But my heart quakes within me, when I see a bold presumptuous mortal erect himself before the throne of Jehovah, look up in his face, and ask him, WHY? Gladly would I cherish, as the humble instrument of him whose character it is, that "He gathers the lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom;" gladly would I cherish those humble souls who in the spirit of the gospel ask, "WHY, therefore art thou red in thy apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine press?" Such enquirers will presently find the answer. They will find the cause deeply seated in their own breasts; but we would never fail to raise our warning voice in the ears of that bold presumer who must measure all God's ways and methods by his little inch of line. Who must pare down the gospel to suit his notions of right reason and philosophy. Is it not enough for us to know that God has seen fit to save sinners by a Mediator, rather than by an exertion of absolute benevolence? But we are not compelled to rest the matter here. Brethren,

is the sovereign of the universe like the sovereign of this earth? Can God blast his character as a conniver at sin, and then re-establish it again? Are the laws of heaven like the laws of earth, so imperfectly contrived that they require to be occasionally relaxed and accommodated to circumstances. Shall mercy and justice blend together, and take place of each other with God, as they often do with man? No. The case is a plain one, when contemplated in the light of reason alone. God is the fountain of law, and also of perfection. We know of no such thing as perfect right but by looking up to him. We only learn what purity is, by mingling with that celestial band who "are full of eyes within, and they rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty."

How shall this fountain become polluted; should this great Sun of the moral universe present but one spot upon his disk; should perfect purity and pardoned pollution huddle together around the throne of the Almighty; where, O! where would Gabriel and his compeers in glory look next? For,

"Chaos umpire sits."

Would not this dry up that impassable gulph, which now rolls between heaven and hell? In a word would not God cease to be God?

But why do we detain you by suggestions of reason? Let us open the Bible, that only sure index of God and his law. Here the question is put to rest forever. It is no longer a doubt whether God can receive the sinner to his favour without reparation being made to his divine government. The whole structure and frame of the gospel speaks this language, and no other. For two thousand years the Jewish altars smoked with the blood of innocent victims. Every vein that gushed, poured its flood towards Calvary. Every victim as it died, rolled its expiring eyes to heaven, and proclaimed by every groan, "God is offended, and man is the offender"—proclaimed "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together"—proclaimed, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin?" With the eye fixed upon the dying sacrifice, and hard by the Jewish altar stood the devout worshipper; there upon his staff leaned the holy patriarch, with his mind directed back to the first promises of grace. "I will put enmity be-

twen thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Upon these specks of gospel light, the trembling eyes of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob rested. We see them with eagerness bending forward, and hanging over the long vista of more than a thousand years, and labouring to rend asunder that almost impenetrable cloud that lies extended between them and Calvary; between them and the Shiloh that is promised. The same haziness rested upon the Jewish church, and the temple worship to the very last. Now and then the mind of the devout patriarch, or heaven enlightened prophet, seems to burst through the darkness, like the sun through a mid-day cloud, and we hear one say, "the Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee, a prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me, unto him shall ye hearken." We hear another cry out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Approaching still a little nearer to gospel times, the clouds disperse, and the highly favoured Isaiah is permitted to draw an almost full portrait likeness of the Saviour, and to expound pretty distinctly the principle of gospel reconciliation, and atonement. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows—But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

At length the Saviour himself comes. And how is his coming announced. The very terms of annunciation stand in the place of a thousand arguments. By implication they distinctly tell us why Christ was humbled, and why he suffered. They proclaim the immaculate purity of the Father of eternity, while he mingles together mercy and truth, righteousness and peace. "And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about

them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord—And suddenly there came with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

Are these facts, or do I detail an empty fiction? Did the word become flesh and dwell among us? Is it true, that the second person of the adorable Trinity is mysteriously united to humanity. Is it true, brethren, that the manger of Bethlehem does contain that very being respecting whom the prophet Isaiah sung in such lofty strains? "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Is it true, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life?" Yes, friends, it is true, or Christ is a false witness. Remember, we are endeavouring to solve the question, why the humiliation and sufferings of the Saviour were necessary? With the character we have given to Christ, and the facts we have stated respecting him above full in view, pass on with the Saviour through the whole of his life. See him, the wisdom of God in every word he uttered—See him the arbiter of nature—The God of life and the sympathizing friend. Accompany him to the garden of Gethsemane, where the scene of our text is laid. Walk by his side as he slowly ascends the hill of Calvary, more pressed with the bitterness of imputed sin, than he was by the weight of his cross. Behold him, the first, the only being of his kind, ever exhibited to the gaze of an adoring and admiring universe. The work to be effected is grand, the means employed, and the immediate agent who is to wield those means are equally grand and magnificent. Look upon the cross; see the hand that placidly yields to the nails that has affixed it to the cross. It is the very same hand that stretched out those heavens that are now gathering darkness and amazement. The power that is now feebleness itself in the hands of ruffian malice, is the same that

laid the substantial foundations of that earth, which now quakes and trembles, and sympathizes with its expiring Maker. The being that said upon the cross, "I thirst," is the same that commanded, and all things stood fast. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." The scene that we are now contemplating was not exhibited in a corner. The tragedy was acted upon the great theatre of the universe. It was for the benefit and instruction of every subject of God's moral government.—Myriads of angels were there. Those heavenly hosts retire from the scene. They wing their way back again to heaven. They look upon the throne of the great I AM, and they beheld an effulgence there, they never beheld before. They bow still lower before that God, respecting whom they have just had a practical demonstration of the high and awful truth; "thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity."

The day on which the Saviour was crucified, we have no doubt, formed a new æra in the government of the great Omnipotent. God governs angels, he governs every intelligent being by the agency of means. Although the throne upon which he sits, as it respects himself is incapable of being either strengthened or weakened, elevated or depressed; yet the empire he sways over moral agents, is the result of moral means, and as it respects his creatures, may be augmented or diminished. We do know that among some of God's subjects, his authority had been dispised, and rebellion was the result. This rebellion, though it approached not the throne of Jehovah, doubtless gave a momentary shock to those principalities which kept their first estate.

It is highly probable the rebellion of angels did not take place long before the creation of this world in its present form, and the origin of the present race. And, it is equally probable that the first exploit of the prince of darkness after he had lost all hope of regaining heaven, was the seduction of our first parents. Angels have rebelled; men have revolted. A new bond must be given to the divine government. A more awful sanction must be thrown round the divine law. Rebellion must be stopped. It cannot be stopped by the exercise of naked power. The sovereignty of God over

his moral creation, can never be the sovereignty of mere power. It is the sovereignty of intellect and of conscience, it is the result of moral motives directly applied, but applied upon moral principles. Hence was the necessity of the incarnation of the second person of the adorable Trinity; that a higher sanction might be given to the divine law, in the obedience and sufferings of so extraordinary and dignified a person, than could have been afforded by the interference of any merely created being. The law of earth, with slight variations is the law of heaven. The law of man is the law of angels. Its principle, its essence is LOVE. This law had been violated by man; it had also been violated by angels. But he took on him the seed of Abraham. Under this law Christ must be born, to it he must render his obedience, subjecting himself to its penalty. "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Few objects are to be effected by this new and stupendous arrangement. A world is to be saved. The church is to be redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold—"but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." All this is to be done in such a way, that a blaze of burning justice is to issue from the throne of God on every side. The rebellion must be stopped. It was stopped, and among the higher order of intelligence, stopped forever, by that dreadful fear which covered our world with darkness, from the sixth hour till the ninth. It was stopped when the dreadful sentence was executed. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, smite the man that is my fellow, sayeth the Lord." It was stopped when he "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." When Christ bowed his head upon the cross, said, "it is finished, and gave up the ghost." It was stopped when rising from the grave, he ascended to his Father, and to our Father, and is ever beheld, even to the frontiers of Jehovah's dominions, sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having led captivity captive; and who is heard saying of himself, "I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forever more." Amen.

Brethren—You asked me to write an article for your contemplated Magazine; promising insertion, even should you not in all respects, accord the sentiment—That article shall be

#### "MY TESTIMONY AND ACT."

First my *Testimony*.—One war fought in the United States, Presbyterian against Presbyterian, I was too young to witness: I can, however, declare it as grey heads have told me. I have listened when a boy, to many interesting details given around the quiet fire, during the long winter evenings. An honest and uncompromising difference of sentiment on the subject of Psalmody, conducted to a long and fearful struggle. Our ministers then were but few; but they were uncommon men. I remember how some of them looked. Their manner of life I have heard described. Their sayings, and parts of their sermons I have heard repeated. They were tender-hearted, fearless of man, with gigantic intellect; "servant in spirit, serving the Lord." Such men are not feeble or unfelt when they contend. Firm of purpose, original in thought, and of towering acquirements; the sweep of their arms was tremendous. Their blows fell upon each other. It is believed, (those who saw the battle have not a doubt of it,) that the same amount of soul and mind, strength and fervour exerted in a given direction, would with the blessing of God, have roused the churches to educate and send into the great field, five thousand labourers! But their zeal did not take that direction; and well for Satan's kingdom it did not. Their blows fell upon each other! One half of them did believe the church in danger; to allow uninspired men to select their own words in praising God, they thought would open the gate to every error. It seemed to be throwing falsehood on the altar of incense; but the anticipated ruin did not overwhelm us in the way they supposed. If they had engaged in conducting toward the ministry several thousand youthful converts, nothing could have better enabled them to part with 150 or half that number of brethren, had they fallen into Arianism as was apprehended. The loss did not occur, but it was not prevented by any thing which was said or done during the contest. The possible good was not accomplished, because their blows fell