

T H E

# UNION PULPIT.

A COLLECTION OF SERMONS BY MINISTERS  
OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS.

---

“In essentials, unity ; in non-essentials, liberty ; in all things, charity.”—*Augustine.*

---

FIRST EDITION.

---

WASHINGTON, D. C.

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM T. SMITHSON,  
FOR THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

1860.

---



Entered according to Act of Congress, June, 1860,  
By WILLIAM T. SMITHSON,  
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Columbia.

BUELL & BLANCHARD, PRINTERS.  
C. W. MURRAY, STEREOTYPYER.  
STEREOTYPED BY BLANCHARD'S NEW PROCESS.



*P. D. Gurley*

## CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

BY REV. P. D. GURLEY, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE NEW YORK AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C.

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.—*John*, xiv, 6.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. But those passages of Scripture which shed light upon the character of Jesus, and upon the method of salvation by His name, are of surpassing interest, and demand our most careful regard and study. Such a passage is the one before us: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." This is the language of Jesus respecting Himself. If the question be, Where is the way that will lead perishing sinners to the Father and to heaven? He answers, "I am the way." If the question be, Where is the truth that can guide us along that way till we reach the high and glorious termination? He answers, "I am the truth." And if the question be, Where is the power that can raise us from the death of sin, so that we shall be able to see that truth, and to walk in that way? again He answers, "I am the life." Surely these are high claims. But the Son of God had a right to make them. By many mighty miracles, and, above all, by rising from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion, He proved beyond a doubt the Divinity of His mission, the truth of His testimony, and the validity of all His pretensions. We need, therefore, have no misgivings while He stands before us, and addresses us in the words of the text. The declaration is true. Upon that we may rely. Our chief concern should be, that we may rightly understand and faithfully apply and improve it. To aid you in so doing shall be the principal object of this discourse. What, then, does the Lord Jesus mean when He says, "I am the way?" I answer:

1. He is the way to heaven by *the doctrine* which He teaches.

He has shown us in His teachings, and shown us clearly, as no other teacher ever did, what principles we must embrace, what feelings we must cultivate, what objects we must pursue, and what kind of a life we must lead, if we would reach the house of His Father and the home of the blessed. Professions without piety, forms of religion without the substance, adhering to externals and neglecting the heart, cleaving to our own merits instead of trusting in Him, tithing mint, anise, and cummin, and omitting judgment, mercy, and faith—this He has told us is the way to perdition, but not to salvation; the way to hell, but not to heaven. While, on the other hand, the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, repentance towards God and faith in Himself as the Saviour, purity of heart and a life bearing the impress of love to God and our neighbor—these, He has told us, are the preparation we must seek, if we would sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of glory. This is plain and faithful instruction. No one need misunderstand it. It is level to the capacity of a child. And because He has so spoken, we say He is the way to heaven by His *doctrine*. He teaches men the true way, as opposed to the false and misleading paths that would conduct them down to ruin.

2. Secondly—Jesus is the way to heaven by His *death*. There were legal obstacles in the way of our return to our Father's face and favor. We had offended His infinite majesty; we had incurred His infinite displeasure. We had broken that law which is holy, and just, and good. We were exposed to its awful penalty; and that penalty inflicted in its fullness would have sunk us to the world of despair, and held us there forever. What, then, was done for our rescue? Jesus interposed for us. He said, Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. And how did He ransom us? *He gave Himself for us*. Taking our nature into personal union with His Divinity, He became our substitute and surety. He stood in our place. He assumed our legal liabilities. He obeyed the precepts of the law in our stead. He endured the penalty of the law in our stead. Yes, He obeyed, and He suffered—obeyed and suffered as the accepted substitute of sinners, till the violated law was honored, the claims of justice were met, and God, for His sake, without tarnishing any perfection of His character or compromising any principle of His government, could offer us terms of pardon and make us the heirs of glory. It was thus, my hearers, that

the mighty barriers were removed which prevented our return to happiness and God. That removal was the price of blood. It cost the humiliation, the obedience, the agony, and the ignominious death of Him, who, though He was God's equal, consented to become our brother; nay, more—consented to become “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” It is with reference to all this that He says to us to-day, “I am the way.” He means, not only that He has shown us the way to heaven by His teachings, but that *He has opened it by His death.*

3. Again—Jesus is the way to heaven by His *example*. It is true, we need preceptive instruction to give us light, and we need the efficacy of a sin-atonement sacrifice to give us access to God; but we need more than these: we need to have before us the life of One, who, in our nature, without defilement or deviation, has trod the rugged pathway to heaven, and in so doing has gone before us, and shown our feet the way. This priceless boon we have. The life of the incarnate Son of God is a model life, beautiful, stainless, perfect, which every candidate for bliss within the veil is required to study and to imitate. By sojourning in this vale of sin and sorrow for more than thirty years, finishing His work, and then returning to His Father, He has taught us how to live, and taught us what sort of a life is *our* best and truest preparation for going to the Father.

And what is the force of that teaching, its method and its drift? I answer, It shows us One who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;” One who, from the beginning to the end of His earthly pilgrimage, devoted Himself to the glory of God and the highest welfare of humanity; One who “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil;” One who was ever diligent in His work, devotional in His habits, humble in spirit and deportment, patient in tribulation, forbearing towards His enemies, a stranger to revenge, a pattern of self-denial, the helper of the needy, the instructor of the ignorant, the comforter of the afflicted, the loving, suffering, dying friend of sinners—I say, it shows us such an One, holds Him up before us in a most clear and impressive light, bids us commune with His history till we imbibe His very spirit, and assures us that the more closely we conform to Him in feeling and deportment, the more sure and reliable is our moral preparation for the blessedness of heaven. In reading the

narratives of the Evangelists, we see more than the teachings of Jesus, more than the death of Jesus; we see His life, and

“In that life the law appears,  
Drawn out in living characters.”

“Follow me,” He says, pointing to His own clear and radiant path—way—radiant with the light of meekness, purity, and love—“I am the way.” Ah, now we understand Him; He is not only the way to heaven by His teachings, and by His death, but He is also the way by His bright and perfect example. Oh, that there were an heart in every one of us to say,

“His track I see, and I'll pursue  
The narrow way, till Him I view.”

But we must pass on to our second inquiry: What does Jesus mean when He says, “I am the truth?” I answer—He is the truth because He is the substance of all the typical shadows, and the accomplishment of all the prophecies and promises of a Saviour, which we find in the Old Testament. No matter what these types, and prophecies, and promises, may be, or what the extent and value of the “good things” they prefigured and predicted, all, all are realized in Him. He is the *true* medium of intercourse between earth and heaven, of which Jacob's ladder was the type. He is the *true* lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, of which the Paschal lamb was the type. He is the *true* propitiatory sacrifice, of which the Mosaic sacrifices were the type. He is the *true* High Priest and Intercessor, of which the Levitical high priests were the type. And He is the *true* object of faith, the true source of spiritual healthfulness and healing, of which the brazen serpent was the type. He is the “Shiloh,” whom Jacob predicted; the “Prophet,” whom Moses predicted; the “Prince of Peace,” whom Isaiah predicted; the “Lord our Righteousness,” whom Jeremiah predicted; the royal “David,” whom Ezekiel predicted; the “Messiah,” whom Daniel predicted; the “Branch,” whom Zachariah predicted; and the “Desire of all nations,” whom Haggai and Malachi predicted. He is the fulfilment of all that the ancient Prophets announced respecting Him that should come to be “the glory of Israel,” and “a light to lighten the Gentiles.” Did they say He should be born in Bethlehem? There Jesus was born. Did they say He should be descended from the family of David according to the flesh? Such was His descent. Did they say He should be despised and rejected of

men? So He was despised and rejected. Did they say He should be led as a lamb to the slaughter? So He, a meek and patient sufferer, was led to the death of the Cross. Did they say He should not be left under the power of death—should not be permitted to see corruption? This was fulfilled in the case of Jesus. The third day He rose. Did they say He should see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied; that a seed should serve Him; and that the Lord would send the rod of His strength out of Zion? It is so done, even to this very day. His sufferings are rewarded in many lands; His converts are multiplying as the drops of the morning; and the rod of His strength, the Word of His grace and salvation, is converting and redeeming the world. We repeat it, then—Christ is the truth in this most interesting and important sense: He is the substance of all the typical shadows, and the fulfilment of all the inspired predictions and promises of a Saviour.

But He is the truth in another sense. He is the source of truth—the great Prophet of the church, whose revelations are that testimony, full and infallible, by believing and obeying which, sinners come through Him “the way” to the Father and to heaven. We need something to guide us every day—something to show us our enemies, that we may avoid and resist them—something to warn us of our dangers, that we may flee and escape them—something to set before us the objects of legitimate pursuit, that we may seek and secure them—the objects of legitimate affection and trust, that we may love and embrace them—something to tell us what spirit we must exhibit, what aims we must cherish, what excellences we must cultivate, what hopes we must entertain, and what duties we must perform, that we may attain to glory, honor, and immortality. In other words, we need an infallible rule of faith and practice; and Christ, in His Word, is that rule. He is the Amen, the true and faithful Witness. The Bible is His testimony. As our great Teacher, He has given it to us for our guidance and our good. It tells us truly and unmistakably “what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of us.” It comes to us through his hands as Mediator, as one of the fruits of His gracious interposition; and its every utterance bears the impress of His mediatorial faithfulness and love. Christ speaks in these Oracles, from the beginning to the end of the volume—speaks as our Monitor and Guide—speaks with an accuracy that never errs, and with a fidelity that never fal-

ters—speaks for our benefit, for our direction, that we may find and pursue the way to heaven. And hence it is that, in exhibiting to us His own character, His transcendent claims upon our confidence, He says, “I am the truth;” I am the great centre and source of that true light, the light of Revelation, which alone can guide earth’s guilty and benighted wanderers home.

But Christ is more than the way to heaven—more than the light of truth to show us the way; He is the *life*. He has life in Himself, and He is the author of spiritual and eternal life to all who put their trust in Him. Those whom He saves are by nature the children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins. In this condition, the Gospel finds them. They have ears, but they hear not; eyes have they, but they see not. They are told the way to heaven, but they are listless and stupid. The great and precious truths of the Gospel are urged upon them with affectionate fidelity, but they feel no interest, they exhibit no concern. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. What, then, is the first great want of the perishing sinner? *Life, life, spiritual life*. Life must be imparted before the eye can see, or the ear can hear, or the heart can feel. And who gives life but the Prince of Life? He intercedes for His chosen, even when they are dead in sin. He prays that they may be regenerated. That prayer is heard; and lo! the Holy Spirit descends upon them with almighty quickening energy, and, in an instant, they spring into life. Old things pass away, and all things become new. Then they see the way, and they begin to walk in it. Then they hear the truth, they understand it, and they begin to make it their rejoicing and their guide. Then they are alive unto God; but how? Through the intercession of Him who has said to them, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Regeneration, the beginning of spiritual life in the soul, is, in every instance, a fruit of the Lord Jesus’ mediation—an answer to His prayer. And, then, how is that life perpetuated and advanced? Still in answer to the prayer of Jesus, and through the efficacy of His blood. Because He lives, and pleads, and spreads His wounded hands, in heaven, the regenerated believer holds on his way. He grows in grace; he triumphs over the world; he presses onward and upward; he runs; he rises; he ripens for glory within the veil. Why? There is a hidden bond uniting him to One who has said, “I am the life.” His life is hid *with Christ* in God. There is a hidden Intercessor who prays

for him daily, and prevails—prays, not that he may be taken out of the world, but that he may be kept from the evil. There is a hidden source of grace, and strength, and comfort, and blessing, with which he is connected, as the branch with the vine; that source is “the fullness” that dwells in Jesus. By faith and prayer he draws upon that fullness continually; and there lies the secret of his growth in grace, and perseverance therein to the end. Because Jesus lives, he lives. True, the body dies, and sees corruption; but in the grave it is still united to Him who is “the resurrection and the life,” and, for this reason, it can only remain there for a season. The blood and advocacy of Jesus avail even to the opening of the graves of His people. In Him “shall all be made alive,” and with soul and body reunited, purged from the last stain of sin, and adorned with “the beauty of holiness,” they shall go up together to the employments and the rest of the redeemed. And how shall it be with them there? Through the endless ages, their vital union with Jesus will continue. Through the endless ages, His sin-atonement merits and His ever-prevailing intercession will be their security. And with reference to all that bright, and glorious, and immortal future which is before them, it will ever be said by all who know their history, their relations, and their indebtedness to the Son of God, Because He lives, they shall live also. Surely not less than all this, my hearers, does the Saviour intend to teach us, when He says to us in the Scriptures, and says to us by His servants, and says to us by our own experience and hope of His mercy, and says to us by the Cross, and through deeply and touchingly significant sacramental symbols of His own appointment, “I am the life.”

You perceive, therefore, that the passage before us is radiant with light and mercy. It gives us just the instruction, and just the encouragement, and just the word of warning and guidance, which we need. Sin has darkened our minds. In our natural estate, we are wanderers from holiness and heaven. Jesus meets us in our wanderings, assures us of His interest in our welfare, shows us what we must do and where we must go if we would find our true destination, pours the radiance of His own ineffable character and doctrine upon our souls, and says to us, Give up the false views and principles that have been hitherto misleading you; sit at my feet; confide in my instructions; “I am the way.” But *then* we see that sin is more than darkness; it is guilt, impurity, cor-

ruption—a barrier to communion with God—a high and fearful wall of separation between His favor and our souls. Who shall remove the barrier? Who shall demolish the separating wall? Jesus does it by His death. He becomes our sin-atonement sacrifice. Trust in my merits, He exclaims, and your iniquities shall be remembered against you no more. “I am the way.” I not only show you the way to the Father, but I remove the obstacles, that you may walk therein and be saved. But when we have seen the right road, and the obstacles to our entering upon it have been removed, and our feet are inclining towards it, we are ready to say, Oh, what a help it would be to us, if we had some bright and perfect pattern of a holy life to be ever before us as a stimulus and a guide. Such a pattern do I give you, says the Saviour. “Follow Me;” I am the way by My example. But then we find that we need more than the light and help of such an example. We need verbal instruction, line upon line, and precept upon precept. Even this want is met, says the Saviour, for “I am the truth;” I am the substance of the Old Testament shadows; I am the fulfilment of its predictions; the whole of Divine Revelation relates to Me, points to Me, comes from Me; and I offer it to you, that it may be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. But then another difficulty meets us, more serious and formidable than all the rest. While we listen to the Saviour’s doctrine, distinguishing the true way to heaven from every other; while we contemplate His atonement, levelling and removing every barrier; while we see His holy example beckoning us onward and upward; and while we hold in our hands the sacred Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Him: behold! what is our real condition? We are spiritually dead—dead to the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, the claims of God, and the realities of eternity. How, then, can we move? How can we arise and go to the Father? We need some new principle in our very hearts—some living, vital force, that shall quicken our faculties, break our fatal slumbers, raise us from the deep long death of sin, and urge and impel us onward to duty and to God. And even this, says the Saviour, I am able to bestow, for “I am the life.” I proffer you the renewing of the Holy Ghost. I promise you perpetual access to My own infinite fullness. I give unto you eternal life, and you shall never perish. I will redeem you from the corruption of sin, and through everlasting ages the promise shall be gloriously verified,

that, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Oh, my hearers, these are great and precious revelations. The eternal Son of God, "He of whom Moses in the law and the Prophets did write," has verily come to us, perishing, guilty sinners, on an errand of mercy—come with the clearest credentials—and what has He said? "I am the way" to the Father and to heaven. I *show* you the way; I *open* to you the way. "I am the truth;" I give you just the light you need, and all the light you need, to direct you *in* that way. "I am the life;" I offer you spiritual quickening, the redemption of the body, and then eternal preservation, security, and blessedness, beyond the reach of sin and sorrow. What a message is this to be received from such a source, by such sinful, erring, dying creatures as we are! A message of great joy, indeed! If we improve it, it will save us; but if we undervalue and neglect it, it will but aggravate our ruin.

The great question of questions for us all is this: Are we going to the Father—going to His glorious and blissful presence, as our everlasting home? Not by our own wisdom, our own righteousness, our own efforts, can we reach that blessed destination. He who came from that presence, and returned to it again, has said—and they are words that should sink down into our hearts—"No man cometh unto the Father but by *Me*." You can go elsewhere, my hearers, without Christ. You can go to the servitude of sin, and to the vanities of the world, without Christ. You can go far, far away from all your truest interests and all your most urgent and momentous duties, without Christ. You can go down, down to lower depths of darkness, and impenitence, and unbelief, and sin, without Christ. You can go to a cheerless sick bed, and a hopeless death, and a terrifying judgment seat, and a wretched eternity, without Christ. But if you would turn your face in the other direction; if you would aspire to a brighter destiny; if you would rise to the soul's true rest, the bosom of your Father and your God; then you must hear and heed the declaration of the Son of God, "No man cometh unto the Father but by *Me*." Rely upon it, this Jesus whom we preach is the ladder by which you must climb to heaven; He is the truth that must direct you in your upward progress; and He is the life that must quicken, and animate, and sustain, and preserve you, to the end of your journey and forever. Shall He be *your* way, *your* light, *your* life—or will you turn away from Him, and reject Him, and wander on and perish? My brethren, *is* Christ *our* way, our light, our life? and are we actually

going to heaven, by the guidance of His Word, the efficacy of His atonement, and the vitalizing power of His Spirit. Oh, then, let us be thankful unto Him, and bless His name forever. Let us cleave to Him with a fonder affection, and rely upon Him with a firmer confidence, and serve Him with a warmer and a more unreserved devotion to His person and His cause. Nor let it seem to be among the least of our precious privileges, that from time to time we are permitted to sit together at His table, and to do this in remembrance of Him whom we *do* delight to remember and to honor as the Way, the Truth, and the Life—by whom, as we humbly hope and believe, we are going to the rest of the ransomed—going to the very fountain of blessedness—*going to the Father.*