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SERMON CCXXII.

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THE SINNER ARRAIGNED AND CONVICTED.

DANIEL v. 27. *Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.*

JOB observes, that "the triumphing of the wicked is short." This remark was signally verified in the narrative connected with the text. Belshazzar, the monarch of Chaldea, was indulging in sinful and intemperate merriment, accompanied with profane contempt of the God of Israel. While employing the vessels, which he had plundered from Jehovah's temple, in profane appropriation to the honor of his idols and the sensuality of his guests, a mysterious hand appeared inscribing on the wall of his palace the ominous sentence which was translated by Daniel, and a part of whose import is given in our text. This portion of the inscription described his character, and another his doom: and "in that night," says the sacred historian, "was king Belshazzar slain." "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

But, my hearers, there are balances in which we must all be weighed; and if, when the scales are suspended and that scrutiny takes place, *Tekel*, as in the case of the impious monarch, should be inscribed on all our pretensions and stamped on all the claims we advance, how sad, how sorrowful beyond conception must our condition be. "God," we are assured, "has appointed a day, in which he *will* judge the world in righteousness;" and as through that ordeal each one of us must pass, it is the dictate of wisdom to ascertain, if practicable, by anticipation, what our situation is likely to be, when "time" to us "shall be no longer." The great inquiry then, arising from the text, in application to ourselves, and to others for whom we feel concern, or in whom we take interest, is, on what individuals, or classes of individuals, is this sentence likely to be pronounced, and this censure liable to fall "in

the day of our Lord's appearing." Who will then be "found wanting?" and "who shall be able to stand?" It cannot admit of question, that radically defective in character will be found all the openly *immoral*, whether their immorality be confined to the breast of one, or extend to the violation of more, or of all the commands of the decalogue. All who live and die in the commission of gross and flagrant sin, unrepented of and unforsaken, must fall under condemnation. "Be not deceived," says one who was authorized to decide on this subject, "neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of God." For "because of such things as these, cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience." But it can hardly be necessary to say much, to prove that in all the openly vicious there is a radical failure of the character necessary for heaven. This point very few will have the hardihood to contest.

But, as a general remark, which we shall establish and corroborate by several particular details, it must be asserted, that *all unrenewed, unregenerate persons*—who have not "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"—all who have not, in the language of the Bible, "passed from death unto life"—are, by him who is to decide the fates of men, pronounced unfit for the abodes of heavenly bliss.

1. Let us place in the balances the *mere moralist*, and bring *his* pretensions to the test. Some consider the whole of religion as consisting, the whole of "the duty which God requires of man" as contained in the performances and virtues, which are ordinarily comprehended under the common phrase, morality; whether the term embraces only those attributes of human character which consist in giving to every one his equitable *due*, or extends to those exercises of benevolence and charity, which form the constituents of distinguished philanthropy; whether, simply, the righteous man "for whom," as Paul expresses it, "one will *scarcely* die," or "the good man, for whom some *would* dare to die." All pretensions beyond these are regarded by the class to whom we now allude, as hypocritical, ostentatious, unnecessary or fanatical. But let us weigh, in the balances of the sanctuary, the claims of the moralist in the narrower or broader signification of the term. To what will these claims amount? It will be seen, on examination, that these matters, which are considered as the *whole*, or at least as the *principal part* of duty, are regarded in but a *secondary* and subordinate light, by him who holds in his hands the scales of divine justice, and truly estimates the weight and worth of whatever is placed in them. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," he asserts to be "the first and great commandment." To that of "loving our neighbor as

ourselves," he assigns only a secondary place, calling it "the second" commandment, and observing concerning it, that it is "like unto the first." What then, if weighed in the balances, is to become of the man, who lays it down as a principle, and acts upon it as the maxim of his life, that there is no religion and no divine requirement, beyond feeling and performing justice and mercy to our fellow men? When the law of God is thrown into one scale, and such a man deposited in the other, must not *Tekel* be inscribed on all his pretensions, on all his attainments, on all his expectations?

So thought and so felt some of the most eminent, exemplary personages that have ever lived. By whom has the character of *Isaiah* ever been impeached? Yet, *he* says of *himself*, "I am a man of unclean lips." Who has ever discovered a flaw in the character of *Daniel*, as delineated on the sacred page? Yet, Daniel said, including himself among his people, and involving himself in one common charge with them, "O Lord, to *us* belongeth confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though *we* have rebelled against him." How more than ordinarily brilliant shines the character of the patriarch who dwelt in Uz. Look at the attributes and actions of Job. He "was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor. He brake the jaws of the wicked and plucked the spoil out of their teeth. When the ear heard him, it blessed him, when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him." Why? "Because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless that had none to help him: the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to leap for joy." *He* possessed, then, in an eminent measure, an unparalleled degree, that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father," which, according to the apostle James, consisted, as one of its primary and essential ingredients, in "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Surely, such a man must possess spiritual weight. Let us then place him in the balances: but he has seated himself there of his own accord, and to what discovery is he brought? To this: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes:" which is perfectly tantamount to the confession, "I am weighed in the balances and am found wanting." And there he sat ashamed, confounded, and alarmed, till another object appeared in sight. *That* relieves and even transports him, and he exclaims, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Weigh him after this, and he is no longer "found wanting;" he is complete in Christ," and can scan and survey the holy law of God in all the strictness of its requisitions, and the severity of its sanctions. For his Redeemer is in the scales with him, that Redeemer who "magnified the law and

made it honorable ;" who "redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him." But "without Christ he could do nothing, and was nothing ;" and he was constrained, in answer to the question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?" to reply, "Not one."

2. Another candidate for heaven, whose pretensions it may not be amiss to scan, is the religious *formalist*. He tells us, that he is punctiliously religious—his prayers and his alms—his church and his closet—the baptismal font and the sacramental table, all testify to the fairness and fullness of his claims to "sit in heavenly places." But Jehovah long ago weighed characters of this description and pronounced them wanting. Heartless forms without heartfelt experience will not answer. He had a people, who, in the days of Jeremiah, exclaimed with no small confidence, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." To this people, then, before and afterwards, thus "trusting in man and making flesh their arm ;" thus "sacrificing to their own net and burning incense to their own drag," he had occasion to say, in the language of reproof and rebuke, by *one* prophet, "rend your heart and not your garments ;" by *another*, "to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? Bring no more vain oblations : your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth : they are a trouble unto me : I am weary to bear them." "Ye that compass yourselves about with sparks of your own kindling, and walk in the light of your own fires, this shall ye have at my hand : ye shall lie down in sorrow." And "God manifest in the flesh," when on earth, found the posterity of the same people bolstering their frail and fallacious hopes upon a similar plea—"We have Abraham to our father." "Whose mouth he stopped," and whose vanity he suppressed, by adding, "God is able even of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Thus, too, boasted the Laodicean church, in reference to her fair, but superficial, exterior—"I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." And with similar fidelity, the Searcher of hearts prostrated her pride, by the allegation, "thou art poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked," and ignorant, for "thou knowest it not." Thus must all, who "have a form of godliness," but "deny" or dislike "the power," expect, when "weighed in the balances," to be "found wanting."

3. Let us next examine the claims of the *Antinomian*. He is that kind of religionist, who sets the gracious gospel of Christ in opposition to the moral law of God ; as if the former was intended, or at least calculated, to undermine, vacate, or destroy the latter. In direct subversion of such a theory, the author of Christianity gives the caution, plain, strong and salutary, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." The

tenor of the antinomian's life, if not the direct language of his lips, is, let me "continue in sin that grace may abound." There is a spirit, akin to antinomianism, seriously at work in the hearts of not a few who make no profession of religion, under the influence of which, they remain contented without any visible acknowledgment of religious truth, and mingled with the "world which lies in wickedness." They make the doctrines of the Gospel, misunderstood or perverted by themselves, their plea for refusing or declining to embrace its truth, and to swear allegiance to its author. They make no effort to obtain salvation, *because* they know not before-hand, that, in the purpose of Heaven, they have been "chosen to salvation." They conclude, that if they *are* so chosen, when the time arrives, they will be brought into the fold, and need feel no uneasiness at present, at being out of it. And that if they are *not* the objects of this previous choice, they may as well eat, drink, and be merry:" for do what they may, they must die. Such however most cautiously avoid carrying their principle out into the affairs of "the life which now is." If *sick*, and apprehending dissolution, though this principle might save them much expense from the physician's charge—much distress from the nauseous taste and painful operation of medicine—they nevertheless employ the man of medical skill, and that without knowing, or waiting to ascertain, how the decree of God has decided in the case. If one of this class is engaged in *agriculture*, he ploughs and sows, weeds, waters and manures, without inquiring whether God has decreed him a crop or not. If in *mercantile* employ, he studies the state of the market, inquires how he may most advantageously "buy and sell, and get gain;" and so of other avocations.

Now, unless the adopter of this principle in religious things, apply it also to the affairs of his vocation or profession in the world, what a singular, what a contradictory aspect will he exhibit at the judgment-seat of Christ! It will appear, that, where the subject was distasteful, his principle was tenaciously adhered to, where agreeable and palatable, it was dispensed with, and then he set himself at work to accomplish his projected object, as though omnipotence were his attribute, and the very decrees of God might be set at defiance. O, what a contradiction is sinful, erring man—what an insoluble enigma, the human heart!

But view next the antinomian *professor* in the church. Having entered Zion's sacred inclosure, *he* fancies all is well, it becomes his privilege to sin, at least by omissions of duty, if not by commission of positive trespasses. He is now "in Christ Jesus," and cannot be lost, nor incur condemnation. See this professor *in his family*. Though negligent of domestic devotions; though dispensing with family government, at least in its religious department; though practically dissenting from Joshua, who determined "as for me and my house we will serve the

Lord"—from Abraham, of whom God testified, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him"—from Hannah, who gave her Samuel to the Lord, before he was born and all his life after—from Lois the grandmother, and Eunice, the mother, who began with their Timothy when quite a child, rearing him up to bless the church of God, and to illustrate the truth, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"—*he notwithstanding hopes, when "weighed in the" final "balances, he will not be found wanting."*

View this professor again *in his intercourse with the world*. Carrying out his principle, where he can render it subservient to his secular interests, he soon renders the men of the world fearful of coming, in matters of business, into contact with him—preferring much to transact their affairs even with men of their own unpretending, irreligious stamp, than to have commercial intercourse with him. Can it be said of *such men*, that they are even "not far from the kingdom of God?" "Weighed in" Jehovah's equitable "balances," they must inevitably "be found wanting." What claimants for eternal life still remain? We may specify,

4. That large class, in the fourth place, who call themselves, the *sincere*, the candid and the charitable. Give me but the fact, says the individual ranged under this classification, that my neighbor is sincere in his belief, and I ask no more—I inquire not what that belief is—I am satisfied he is on the road to heaven. God ~~is~~ *pleased* with the great variety of worship that his creatures pay him, whether under the denomination of "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord." If the *pagan* mother be sincere in the sacrifice, let her give her first-born to the jaws of the fishes of prey—the fruit of her body to the waters of the Ganges. If the *Jew* be sincere, let him rave at the name of "Jesus of Nazareth," whom Christians adore, leave his Bible unexplored and sit at the feet of the Rabbi. If the *Papist* be sincere, let him close his eyes and ears to the Scriptures, and submit both his understanding and conscience to priestly domination and control, unbar the door of the Inquisition and expose heretics to its fury. If the *Protestant* be sincere, let one say, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." Let another give glory only to the Father, dethrone the Son, and make a mere attribute of the Holy Ghost. The wings of this man's charity are sufficiently broad and strong to waft them all to heaven!

But if sincerity be all that is necessary to render a man's religion right, how ridiculous a part was acted by Saul of Tarsus, in exchanging his Judaism for Christianity. If he could honestly say, "I verily thought I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," why did he not go on to "waste the church of Christ?"

Why should he exchange the feet of Gamaliel for the feet of Jesus?—the temple of Jerusalem for the jail of Philippi?—the countenance of the priesthood for their menaces and frowns?—the honors, emoluments, and prospects which belonged to him, as “an Hebrew of the Hebrews,” for the prisons and deaths, which awaited him as a Christian?—Why sacrifice a name unblemished, and a reputation untarnished among his own people, to be regarded and treated as “the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things?”

But Paul made the discovery, and happily for him he made it so seasonably, that even sincerity *might be* the high way to perdition. When celebrating the grace, that snatched him, in the midst of his sincerity, “as a brand from the burning”—when telling the world, he sought to convert, of the true, faithful, and worthy to be received saying, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—he could not rest till he added in the language of severe self-reprehension, “*of whom I am chief.*” Hear him when in bonds, in the presence and subject to the power of his enemies—hear him at Agrippa’s bar, appealing to his enemies and challenging investigation into his former life—“My manner of life from my youth, which was at first among my own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.” If they would testify. They were silent under this appeal; they would not testify for him, and they could not testify against him. Was not such a man sincere?

But when he looks at heaven, on what does he ground his hope of entrance there? On his morality, his forms, his duties, his services, his sincerity? On not one, or all of these. In the matter of expectation and dependance, he does with this as the mariner, in danger of shipwreck deals with his most precious cargo. To preserve his vessel and save his life, such a mariner throws all else overboard. Thus, Paul, aware that nothing but the Redeemer’s atoning blood was capable of securing the best man in the world from spiritual and eternal shipwreck, clings to the cross of Christ and lets all else go. “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea, doubtless, I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Away then with sincerity, as in itself alone a competent ground of human hope; it must be *that* sincerity which consists in the belief of evangelical truth. “Sanctify them *through thy truth,*” prays Jesus to his Father, “thy word is truth.”

Do you inquire now, with the astonished disciples, “Who then can be saved?” A satisfactory answer to this inquiry is all important, and shall be next attempted. We observe then,

The *really penitent* belong to that number. Repentance is necessary for all ; otherwise he who was "exalted on high as a Prince and a Saviour," in order to give it, would not have "commanded *all men* every where to repent ;" nor have given to his disciples an order so universal and unqualified in its application, as that "*repentance* and remission of sins should be preached among *all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem." All men are in themselves sinners, and this is in itself the reason, why in the first instance all are "found wanting." For sin consists not only in the "transgression of the law," but in "coming short of the glory of God." "God has concluded all under sin." "Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." Such is universally man's character, and in reference to this character, and in recommendation of the feeling that becomes it, it is written, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise." "To this man," it is testified, "will he look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word." Let the true, genuine penitent then be "weighed in the balances, and *he* will not be found wanting."

Again the sincere evangelical *believer* answers the same description ; he that, besides exercising "repentance towards God, also exhibits "faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." How ample and various are the testimonies on this point. Among them the following constitute but a few. "He that believeth shall be saved." "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned." "Whosoever believeth on him hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." But what is faith? That question is most important. Faith, as it relates to all other subjects, is an affair of the head alone ; but as it relates to the religion of the gospel, the religion that issues in salvation, it involves the heart also. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." There is a faith resting on facts, and implying the attachment of credibility to *them*—this is called historical faith. There is a faith that receives theoretical principles of truth, and is confined to mental action in reference to them—this is speculative faith. Both are necessary, but yet not sufficient, to secure a man from the charge of "being found wanting." To them must be super-added an exercise that implies the attachment of the heart, and as its result, the right ordering of the life. The head may be filled with orthodoxy, and yet the heart be engrossed and the life overrun with heterodoxy. Every truth of the Bible may be believed, simply because the evidence is so plain upon the page of revelation, that it cannot be resisted, and "he who runs must read it." And yet these truths, plain and palpable as they are, may not be received "in the love of them," into "good and honest hearts." James represents the devils themselves as

the subjects of such a faith—"they believe, they tremble" too, but "Satan cannot love." Saving faith implies *trust* in the merits and *love* to the character of Christ, as well as belief of his records. It cries, "Lord save me or I perish"—it "rejoices in Christ Jesus and has no confidence in the flesh." It throws around the sinner the robe of *his* righteousness, having first torn away and displaced the "filthy rags" of *his own*. It carries the sinner into "the city of refuge," safe from "the avenger of blood." It admits the long account of charges in God's book to be correct—audits the whole and certifies its accuracy—it sees in the debit side a long and frightful list of transgressions, and calculates the amount at ten thousand talents—it surveys the credit side, and finds there the gloomy entry, "he hath nothing to pay"—and just as the creditor is going to give orders, "cast him into prison until he has paid the very last farthing," it introduces a mysterious hand, not unlike that which terrified Belshazzar, but for a very different, for a very opposite purpose—the hand of redeeming love, writing at the foot of the account a receipt in full, in the following terms, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." Thus it furnishes the penitent with a complete discharge. Thus "where sin abounded, grace much more abounds." Thus "grace reigns through righteousness;" thus, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This penitent believing sinner is, weighed in the balances and is *not* found wanting," "for he is found in Christ," like Noah in the ark, whom the deluge cannot touch—like Naaman in the pool, where he loses for ever his leprosy, once regarded as incurable. It is grace then that reigns, from first to last, in the salvation of a sinner; for he is "justified by faith," and faith disclaims merit, while it produces, and where genuine, ever must produce all those "fruits of righteousness that are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Bring such a man before his God, and this language of Paul is appropriate to his case—"justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Bring him in presence of his fellow creatures, and James describes his character; "a man is justified by works and not by faith only." But flaming professors of the doctrine of grace, whose life is notwithstanding beclouded and darkened by unholy tempers, and stained by illicit practices, have not the root of this matter in them.

And now, dear hearers, with the law and the testimony in your hands, the law of Moses, which is a ministration of death, and the testimony of Jesus by whom came grace and truth, ascertain where your spiritual posture is; and if *Tekel* is the inscription on your character, let it be effaced at once—let it be commuted for the inscription—"accepted in the Beloved." But if "the foundation," as it respects

yourselves, already standeth sure, having this seal,—“The Lord knoweth them that are his”—then, “naming the name of Christ,” ever after and ever more, “depart from all iniquity.”

SERMON CCXXIII.

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THE NATURE, NECESSITY, AND EVIDENCES OF REPENTANCE.

ACTS ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

This is the answer given by Peter on the day of Pentecost, to the great question asked by a multitude of sinners under conviction.

Repentance is an operation or change in the heart, of which baptism is the outward sign. Both are required in the name of Christ, or with faith in Him. Through this faith, His justifying righteousness is made available to the remission of sin. That which procures remission of sin, secures also the gift of the Spirit, to complete the work of grace in the heart. Therefore, said the apostle, “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” That is—these supernatural effects, which you see, are the operations of the Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration. If you would participate in them, you must repent; and, as a public testimony of your reliance on Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, you must be baptized in his name.

Repentance, as a personal duty required of sinners, is very different from repentance as it is sometimes predicated of God. When God is said to repent, there is implied no alteration in His eternal counsels or decrees, knowledge or dispositions, but simply a change in the events of His providence as they affect, and are viewed by us. When applied to the sinner, however, repentance manifestly implies something more: as it is inseparable from true conversion, it implies all that takes place in the heart of the sinner in the work of regeneration. Hence its great importance as indicated in the answer of Peter to his anxious in-