

# DELIVERANCE FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD (Part 1) - Gal 1:4-5

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on  
Lord's Day Morning, October 13, 1861.

*"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."*— Gal 1:4,5

WHAT an amount of sorrow and misery beyond all calculation, and indeed beyond all conception, there is in this wretched world, this vale of tears, as it is so often justly called, in which our present earthly lot is cast! Not a house, not a family, not a heart is there which does not sooner or later taste more or less deeply of this most bitter cup. How many, for instance, this morning have risen from their lowly beds, or rather their miserable floors, sunk into such poverty that they scarcely know where to get a morsel of bread to eat, or the poorest, meanest raiment to put on! How many, if not sunk into the same depths of absolute want, yet, like a drowning man in a deep and rapid stream, can scarcely keep their head above water in their daily struggle for the means of existence! How many are now mourning over family bereavements, the delight of their eyes being taken from them at a stroke, or by lingering illness! How many youthful hearts, just in the first opening dawn of life, are bleeding under the deepest wounds inflicted upon their tenderest and warmest affections! How many are lying upon their beds of pain and languishing, and some at this very moment struggling and gasping in the agonies of death, and leaving this world without hope!

Thus, as we cast our eyes around us, or frame in our own minds a faint conception of the sorrows heaped upon the sons of men, we may almost say of this wretched world, that it is like Egypt when the angel passed through the land and smote the first-born. *"There was a great cry in the land, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead."* Ex 12:30 Or like the inhabitants of Ekron, when God smote them for their sins, and *"the cry of the city went up to heaven"* 1Sa 5:12 Or like Ezekiel's roll, which was *"written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mournings, and woe."* Eze 2:10

But there is something still worse behind. Is there not a cause for all this sorrow and misery? Does God afflict willingly the sons of men? Would there be such an amount of human wretchedness, unless there had been some provocation on the part of man, to bring down all these chastisements upon his guilty head? There is something then in this world, and something too in the heart of man worse than sorrow. There is sin. When we look at the stream of misery which runs down this wretched world and examine it a little more closely, we see that it is not a stream of pure un-mingled sorrow. It is rather a sewer of corruption than a flowing river of unmixed grief, for ever and anon out of this sewer of corruption, there surge to the top such sad exhibitions of human wickedness and crime, as must appal the mind which is not altogether deadened to every moral and religious feeling.

Look, for instance, at the crimes of the present day. What murders, suicides, deeds of violence, robberies, and hideous acts of uncleanness continually come to light; and how these in some instances, almost accidental discoveries, show what depth of corruption is really working and festering in the heart of man. As the leprosy which broke forth upon the forehead of King Uzziah only revealed the disease itself that had taken possession of his body **2Ch 26:19** so these open crimes that come from time to time to light, are merely marks and tokens of the deep-seated leprosy, that works underneath in the fabric of society as well as in the corrupt nature of man.

But in what a desperate, what a deplorable state should we be if there were no remedy for this misery and wretchedness, which has disjointed earth, and, like a mighty earthquake passing over it, made all its foundations out of course. **Ps 82:5** What less than a present hell would it be if there were nothing in this world but sin and sorrow; if we had just for a few short weeks, or months, or years, to drain deep the cup of affliction, to be immersed in the floods of sin, to go down mourning to our grave, and then to open our eyes in endless misery! But O look up, ye mourning saints, who are often bowed down with worldly grief and sorrow, and much more frequently and much more heavily by the deep corruptions of your heart, look up and see that ray of heavenly light which even now seems to shine across this black gloom, this dense darkness, as a beam of sun sometimes in a moment lights up the face of the earth. *"Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."* **Luk 1:78,79**

Can you not hear, as it were a voice from God that speaks to the guilty sons of men, even such a voice as the shepherds heard when the heavenly choir sang, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men?"* Can you not see how mercy appears coming forth, as from the bosom of God, with angel form? How she speaks as with an angel voice to the sons of men, and tells them that there is a balm for all their woes, a cure for all their diseases? Can you not see a hand which, points to the atoning blood and the justifying obedience of the Son of God, and says, "This is the remedy, the only remedy, which God has provided for all the sin and sorrow which are in the world." Were it not so why need I preach? Why need you hear? If there were no mercy for the sinner; if there were no cure for the sick; if there were no salvation for the lost; if there were no door of hope for the despairing, why need I this morning stand before you, and why need you sit to hear what I may speak in the Lord's name? Our text opens up very sweetly and blessedly the remedy which God has provided for all this misery, the healing balm which he has brought to light in the sufferings, blood-shedding, and death of his dear Son as the way of pardon and peace to all who deeply and spiritually feel themselves to be poor, sinful, guilty transgressors.

The apostle in the verse immediately preceding our text, breathes forth his desire for the benefit and blessing of the Churches of Galatia, in his usual prayerful, yet tender and affectionate salutation. *"Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ."* And then, as if the very mention of grace and peace touched his heart as with holy fire, and opened his mouth to set forth salvation by atoning blood of the Lamb, he breaks forth in the words of our text, *"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."*

Let us, with God's blessing, approach these words; let us come near to this stream that breaks forth in the desert, and see whether we can, with God's help, draw some living water from this well of salvation, which may refresh our spirit, cheer our mind, and comfort our heart. In attempting to do this. I shall, as the Lord may enable,

I.— First, show you how and why this is an evil world.

II.— Secondly, how our blessed Lord gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from it.

III.— Thirdly, that this was in accordance with the will of God and our Father.

IV.— Fourthly, that this will produce an eternal revenue, of praise: "*To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*"

I.—The present is an "evil world:" that is God's testimony of it. You may say, "It is a beautiful world, a glorious world; and I mean as long as I live to enjoy all the happiness which I can possibly get out of it. It is all cant and nonsense to talk about it being such a miserable world. It is true there may be some unhappiness in it; but that is man's own fault. Did not God make it a beautiful world, and can we think that he meant it to be an unhappy one, or that we should be poor unhappy creatures in it?" Such is the language of many a heart, the utterance of many a lip. But whose testimony will stand, God's or man's?

If God has pronounced this to be an "evil world," not all man's vain reasonings, not all man's plausible speeches will alter God's testimony. Man may call evil good, and good evil; man may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; man may call darkness light, and light darkness. But man's testimony does not alter God's reality. If the mouth of God has declared the present world to be "evil," not all the lies of Satan nor all the plausibility of man put together can ever make it to be good.

But what is the world! What does the Holy Spirit mean by the expression, which so often occurs in the New Testament? Does he mean the material world, that wide and spacious earth which we see with our bodily eyes, and upon which our feet tread? Does he mean the mountains and valleys, rivers and brooks, meadows and fields, wooded hills and smiling landscapes, all which proclaim with loud voice their great and bountiful Creator? No. In a sense, it is true, earth literally, materially partakes of the curse of the Fall; for on the day when man fell God cursed the ground for man's sake, and in sorrow he was to eat of it all the days of his life. Thorns and thistles was it to bring forth unto him, and in the sweat of his face was he to eat bread, till he returned unto the ground out of which he was taken. **Gen 3:17,18**

But "the world" here does not mean the material, literal world daily spread before our eyes, but the men and women who dwell in it; for the material world, though it does partake of the curse of the Fall, is not in itself evil, that is, not sinful as the heart of man is who dwells upon it. It is perfectly true that the sin of man has corrupted every spot where it has fallen and carried misery in its train, so that in a sense "*the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together*" under the burdens which the sin of man has laid upon it. But the term "world," as used by the Holy Spirit

in the word of truth, signifies not so much material creation, though it may in a measure embrace that meaning, as the men and women who are inhabitants of it, and especially as distinguished in the mind of God from his own chosen family.

But was man always evil? Did not God create him in his own image, after his own likeness? And when he had thus created him, did he not look down from heaven upon the work of his hands as with holy approbation and pronounce that it was "very good?" Evil, then, though man may be, he did not come evil from the hands of his Maker. It was not possible that a good God could create an evil man, and that a pure Jehovah could create an impure being. Job asks the pregnant question, "*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*" But may we not reverse the inquiry, and say, "Who can bring an unclean thing out of a clean?" No; an enemy hath done this. It was with the Fall, as we read in the parable of the tares in the field. The sower sowed wheat; but whence came the tares? Not from him who sowed the wheat; but "*while men slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.*" Mt 13:25 Satan was the enemy who sowed tares in the wheat field; and Satan it was that sowed sin in the heart of man; for he was permitted, in God's wise, unerring providence, to deceive the woman; she was permitted to entangle the man and draw him into her transgression; and thus "*by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that, or in whom [margin] all have sinned.*" Rom 5:12 That is the source of all the evil which, is now, or ever has been in the world, for that one sin introduced every other sin with it. It brought in its train every iniquity that ever has been conceived by the imagination, uttered by the lips, or perpetrated by the hands of man.

Thus as the acorn contains in its tiny shell the whole oak with all its branching foliage; so that one sin conceived in the mind of our first parent contained in itself all those branches of sin which have covered the world with their lurid shadow, as the oak spreads its shade over the grass beneath. Every faculty of man fell in the fall from its primitive purity and strength. It was as though in the midst of a bright day the sun had in a moment gone down and darkness fell upon the scene; it was as if an earthquake had rent the solid foundations of the earth; or as if a mighty volcano had suddenly opened its mouth in the soil to pour forth clouds of sulphurous smoke and streams of boiling lava. In a moment, as if by a sudden shock, man's whole nature underwent a change, stricken down by sin as by palsy or leprosy. His understanding became darkened, his judgment corrupted, his conscience deadened, his affections alienated, and all that warm current of purity and innocency which once flowed in a clear stream towards God, became thickened and fouled with the sin that was poured into it from the mouth of Satan, and was thus diverted from its course of light, love, and life to run into a channel of darkness, enmity, and death. Thus the fountain was corrupted at its very source, and from this spring-head have all the streams of evil flowed which have made the world a very Aceldama, a field of blood.

This is the fountain whence have issued all that misery and wretchedness which in all ages and in all climates have pursued man from the cradle to the grave; which have wrung millions of hot tears from human eyes; which have broken, literally broken, thousands of human hearts; which have desolated home after home, and struck grief and sadness into countless breasts. But. Oh! this fountain of sin in the heart of man has done worse than this; it has peopled hell; it has swept and is still sweeping thousands and tens of thousands into eternal perdition. Let us, then, not be juggled

into a vain persuasion by the prince and god of this world that it is either a good or a happy world. This is a part of his witching wiles whereby he deceives the hearts of men by vain shows. He must not speak ill of his own principality or of his own dominion, though, like himself, it is full of darkness and despair. Let us not believe Satan's lies but God's truth; and this we certainly shall do if we have the teaching and testimony of God himself in our consciences.

Let this, then, be firmly settled in your heart and mine by the testimony of God in the word, and by the corresponding witness of the Spirit in our breast, that is an "evil world." The world, however large, is but an aggregate of human hearts, - for as in water face answers to face so the heart of man to man; and as my heart is but a copy of your heart, and your heart but a copy of every other man's heart, we carry in our own bosom, if our eyes are enlightened to see what really and truly takes place there, a conviction that it is an evil world, because we find the evil of the world alive and rife in our own breast. But we shall see more of this when we come to show how Jesus gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world. I shall therefore pass on to our second point,

II.-Which consists of two branches:

1. First, the giving of himself for our sins;

2. The object and purpose for which the Lord thus gave himself, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.

1. There is something to my mind inexpressibly sweet and precious in the expression, "*gave himself.*" We find the same words used of our blessed Lord elsewhere in Scripture, as, for instance, where it is said that "*Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it*"; **Eph 5:25** and where the apostle speaking of his living a life of faith on the Son of God adds, "*who loved me and gave himself for me.*" **Gal 2:20** So also when the apostle has bidden us to be "*followers of God as dear children and walk in love,*" he adds this prevailing motive, "*As Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us.*" **Eph 5:2**

1. But in opening up this heavenly mystery, it will be desirable to cast a glance beyond this time-state, and to direct our contemplation to what Jesus was before he voluntarily gave himself for our sins; for if we would spiritually and experimentally enter into this solemn mystery, we must have a view by faith of what he was in the courts of bliss before he thus gave himself. A spiritual contemplation of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, will prepare our mind to see a little of the breadth and length and depth and height and to know something of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge; for love was the moving cause of his giving himself, and therefore dwelt in his bosom before he thus freely surrendered himself to sufferings and death.

We must, therefore, view him as a Person in the glorious Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost; for "*in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" We must, then, with God's help and blessing, raise up believing eyes and believing hearts to view him as one with the Father in nature and essence, as the second Person in that glorious Trinity in which

there are three Persons and but one God. We must also by the eyes of faith view him as the Son of the Father in truth and love, his own true, his own proper, his own eternal Son. We must look at him as lying in the Father's bosom from all eternity, as ever his delight and rejoicing always before him. And we must endeavour, as far as the Lord may enable, to look with believing eyes at the love of the Father toward the Son and the love of the Son toward the Father, and so raise up in our souls some contemplation of the intimate and yet ineffable fellowship and union, enjoyed between the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost in the glorious courts above before time existed or creation was known. It is true, most true, that we cannot comprehend these heavenly mysteries, though they are the food of living faith; nor indeed can we raise up our thoughts to their spiritual contemplation; and yet unless we have some gracious knowledge of them and some living faith in them we shall not be able to enter into the heavenly mystery of the love of Christ.

Unless we see by the eye of faith something of the glory which, the Son of God had with the Father before the foundation of the world, how can we enter into the solemn mystery of his giving himself to suffer, bleed, and die? Our Lord, therefore, speaking of his disciples, said, "*The glory which thou gavest me I have given them*" **Joh 17:22** that is, the knowledge and enjoyment of it. So John speaks of those "*which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God: And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" **Joh 1:13,14** Does not also the apostle give this as a mark of regenerating grace? "For God, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" **2Co 4:6**

We must, then, see his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, before we can see his humiliation in condescending to be for us a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The height of his glory shows us the depth of his condescension. To view what he was in the courts of bliss prepares us to see what he was when he hung upon the cross. This is all the difference between the eye of faith and the eye of sense. The eye of sense merely saw him hanging in shame and agony between two thieves; but the eye of faith sees him as the beloved Son of God bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.

But it may be asked, "When did the Son of God first give himself for our sins? You have told us that it was in eternity before time was. But was sin then known?" No, for creation was then unknown also. But the Church was loved in the mind of God from all eternity, for he himself declares, "*Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*" **Jer 31:3** As, then, all things lay naked and open before the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah, the sin and misery into which she could sink were foreseen and provided for; and thus we may say that the Son of God gave himself for our sins in eternity, in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.

It seems from the testimony of Holy Writ, that there was a solemn council held in heaven between the Three Persons of the sacred Godhead; for we read of "*the counsel of peace being between them both*"- that is, the Father and the Son. **Zec 6:13** We also read, "*Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty;*" and that this was the result of a covenant seems plain from the words in the same Psalm. "*My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that is*

*gone out of my lips."* Ps 89:19-34 This council, it appears, was how the Church, sunk into sin and therefore justly amenable to divine wrath, could be saved in strict accordance with the justice and purity of God. This was the mystery to be solved; this was the enigma which, no finite intellect could unravel.

To devise a plan so as to reconcile every attribute of God in full harmony with the salvation of man; to determine a method how justice and mercy could meet together; how peace and righteousness could kiss each other; how justice could obtain its fullest demands, and yet mercy descend to embrace with its loving arms the guilty sons of men, was indeed a task beyond the utmost faculties of the brightest seraph or the highest archangel. The plan of salvation, therefore, is always represented in the Scripture not only as the greatest display of God's love, but also as the deepest manifestation of his wisdom. "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.*" Rom 11:33 "*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.*" 1Co 2:7 This enigma, then, was solved by the coming forward of the Son of God in the eternal covenant to give himself for our sins. In those solemn councils of heaven he freely offered himself to suffer, bleed, and die for guilty man's sake. But this he could only do by himself becoming man, and by taking the flesh and blood of the children and offering up that pure and holy humanity which he should take in the womb of the Virgin, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

He could thus obey the rigorous demands of God's inflexible justice, endure, and by enduring remove the curse of the law, and thus work out and bring in a perfect and complete righteousness in which his people might stand justified before the throne of God. Thus could he save his people in the strictest conformity to the justice of God, and harmonise every jarring attribute of Deity. In this sense he gave himself for our sins before time itself had birth. He is, therefore, said to be "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,*" and even then to have had "*a book of life,*" in which the names of his chosen people were written. Rev13:8

2. But we may now look at the carrying out of this eternal plan of redeeming love, and view how in pursuance of his giving himself in the eternal covenant, when the time came -God's appointed time-he gave himself for our sins by assuming flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary. There is an expression in the Book of Common Prayer, I think in the Te Deum, which I have often much admired: "When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb." There is to my mind great beauty in the idea that he did not abhor the womb of the virgin; for who was it that lay there but the eternal Son of God. What a conspicuous view it gives of his infinite grace and unspeakable mercy that he could assume our nature into union with his own divine Person in the womb of the virgin!

In this voluntary surrender of himself to endure all the miseries and sorrows of his life here below, we see the greatness of the Lord's love; for "*he bare our griefs and carried our sorrows*" as well as our iniquities. Isa 53:4,11 Thus, as giving himself for our sins, he bore them from the manger to the cross. When, then, by the eye of faith we see him going about doing good; when we hear the gracious words which ever dropped from his lips: when we see the mighty miracles wrought by his hands, we still view him as our sin and burden bearer.

