

## DELIVERANCE FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD (Part 2)

3. But it is especially in the last scenes of his suffering life that we see him freely giving himself for our sins. When, then we follow him into the gloomy garden, where, under the overwhelming pressure of sin and sorrow, he sweat great drops of blood; thence to the Jewish council and Pilate's judgment-hall; and thence to the cross of Calvary where, as the height of indignity, he was crucified between two thieves; in these last scenes of his suffering life and obedient death, we see more especially what the blessed Lord endured when he gave himself up to be made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. For in giving himself for our sins, he took upon himself all their guilt, their penalty, and their punishment. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree as if they had been his own; for having voluntarily put himself into the sinner's place, he stood as the Surety, from whom justice exacted the utmost mite.

Thus, not only did he endure the contradictions of sinners against himself, but what was far harder to bear, he suffered under the intolerable wrath of God, when his Father hid his face from him, when anguish drank up his spirit, and when as made a curse for us, he hung between heaven and earth as a spectacle for men and angels. God the Father accepted this substitution, for it was according to his own eternal will and good purpose that the Son of his love should thus give himself for our sins, that he might put all their guilt and condemnation away, cast them behind God's back, wash them out in the fountain of his atoning blood, and blot them out for ever as a cloud from the face of the heavens. Where should we be, what should we be, what hope could we have of escaping the wrath to come except for this blessed fact. this solemn, divine reality, that the Son of God gave himself for our sins, and thus for ever put them away?

But could this stupendous miracle of mercy and grace have been accomplished but by the Lord's free and voluntary gift of himself? Who could have brought him from heaven? Who could have asked him to come down? What angel or seraph could have whispered the word on high. "Let the Son of God give himself for guilty man?" What human heart could have conceived such a thought, or what human tongue, if such a thought had been conceived, could have breathed the word up to the courts of bliss, "Let the Son of God come down and bleed for us vile polluted sinners?" What! that God's co-equal, co-eternal Son, the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person; that he in whom the Father eternally delighted; he who was worshipped and adored by myriads of angels, -that he should leave this glory, come down to earth, be treated as the vilest malefactor, have nails driven through his hands and feet, and expire on the cross in ignominy and shame! Could such a thought have entered angelic or human breasts?

And yet this was the eternal thought of God; this was the sovereign purpose of the Triune Jehovah; and to accomplish this glorious plan of eternal wisdom and love, the Son of God freely gave himself for our sins. There is a sweet figure of this voluntary gift of himself in the burnt offering spoken of in the first chapter of Leviticus. This sacrifice was entirely voluntary on the part of the offerer, and as such was wholly burnt upon the altar. So our blessed Lord came of his own accord; it was his free,

voluntary act; and thus as the burnt offering was wholly consumed in the flames of the altar, no one part being reserved, so our blessed Lord was wholly consumed in the flames of God's wrath and consumed also in the flames of his own self-sacrificing love. "He gave himself for our sins."

Have you ever seen your sins? Look at the words: how expressive they are! Did you ever have a sight of your sins? Were they ever laid as a load of guilt upon your conscience? Did you ever see their blackness, their enormity, their aggravated nature, their innumerable multitude, and how every one of them deserved an everlasting hell? Did the wrath of God ever fall into your conscience on account of your sins? Did his anger ever drink up your spirit? Was his hand ever heavy upon you night and day, so that your moisture was turned into the drought of summer? Did the curse of the law ever sound in your conscience? Did your iniquities ever appear more in number than the hairs of your head, so that you almost sank into despair under the apprehended wrath of God?

If the Lord has ever wrought anything of this experience with power in your conscience, you will see and feel too something of what it is for Christ to have given himself for your sins, those abominable sins of yours, those black and horrible crimes that have so grieved your conscience, so distressed your soul and made you often fear lest hell should be your everlasting abode. Now until a man has realized something of the guilt of his vile and abominable sins, and they have been laid as a heavy weight upon his heart and a burden upon his conscience, he cannot enter into the solemn mystery of the Son of God giving himself for them. He does not know what sin is; it has not been opened up to him in its real character and awful magnitude; its guilt and filth and bitterness have not been discovered to him by the teaching of the blessed Spirit. He therefore knows little or nothing of the solemn mystery of dying love and atoning blood. He cannot fully and clearly justify God in the gift of his Son, nor can he properly appreciate the love of Christ in coming into such extreme circumstances of shame and suffering that he might bear his sins, and put them away by his atoning blood.

We must, therefore, know something of the guilt and filth of sin in our own conscience, something of its weight and burden, that we may appreciate the solemn mystery, as well as spiritually and experimentally enter into the sweet and sacred blessedness of that heavenly truth that the Son of God freely gave himself for our sins. And when we look not only at our own, but at the innumerable sins which God's people have committed in all ages and in all places, and see that Jesus must have borne them all in his own body on the tree, under all this intolerable load of guilt must not the holy Lamb of God have sunk utterly crushed, broken and overwhelmed by the wrath of God, the demands of Justice, and the curse of the Law, unless he had been supported by indwelling Deity; unless he had been upheld by the mighty power of God; unless he had been sustained and strengthened by the eternal Spirit, through whom he offered himself without spot unto God?

2. But to pass on to the object for which our gracious Lord gave himself: "that he might deliver us from this present evil world." We live in an evil world, and sooner or later every child of God will by deep and painful experience learn the truth of God's testimony concerning it. Its evil character may be glossed over by plausible speeches; the prince and god of this world may by his magic incantations cast a veil over its foul

and ugly features, or transform this worn-out and withered beldame into a pure and innocent maiden in all the charming flush of youth and beauty. But though a veil may conceal deformity, it cannot remove it. Paint and rouge cannot make an old cheek young. The thin sheet spread over a corpse may hide the ghastly face, shrunken features, and stiffened limbs, but it does not turn it into a living man. The plaster over an ulcer may hide the gory matter from view, but it does not make it sound flesh. So Satan by his enchantments may cast a veil over the real character of this evil world, and may hide out of view the deep ulcers which are eating into the very core of man's corrupt nature; but sooner or later they are discovered by a seeing eye and a believing heart under the light, life, and power of the blessed Spirit, and the real state of the case is opened up to a tender conscience.

But the Lord gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world. It would little benefit us to see and feel the malady were there provided no efficacious remedy. Many a dying man feels his mortal disease; but he knows to his sorrow, that a sense of illness can no more cure him, than it can turn pain into ease or sickness into health. Deliverance, deliverance is that which is wanted. Let us see, then, what the blessed Lord came to deliver us from when he gave himself for our sins.

1. First, he gave himself to deliver us from the condemnation of this present evil world. Men are not willing to believe the solemn fact that this world lies under a sentence of condemnation from the wrath of God. But such is the Scripture testimony. "*We know that we are of God,*" says John, "*and the whole world lieth in wickedness*" ; **1Jo 5:19** and if "in wickedness," in condemnation, unless we think that God justifies wickedness.

Paul, therefore, speaking of divine chastisement says, "*For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*" **1Co 11:32** But does not this testimony expressly declare that the world lies under condemnation? If, then, you and I are found at the last great day in the world, we shall be found under the condemnation of the world. When the deluge came, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened, every one who was in the world was drowned by the flood; none were saved but those who were in the ark. When God burnt up the cities of the plain, all the men, women, and children that were found in them were destroyed by the brimstone and fire, which the Lord rained out of heaven. At the last siege of Jerusalem, when Titus destroyed that city, all found within its walls were put to the sword, burnt in the fire, which destroyed the city and the temple, or dragged into captivity.

Now so it will be with you if you are found at death to be one with and in the world; you will be condemned with it, as being found in it and of it, as were those who were drowned in the flood, burnt up in Sodom, and slaughtered in Jerusalem. If you are found on a dying bed in the world, what can you expect but that the same sentence of condemnation will fall upon you in the day of judgment, as that which will be pronounced upon the world by the Judge of the quick and dead? O, the unspeakable mercy of being delivered from that condemnation by a living faith in his blood, who gave himself for our sins that he might save us from the wrath to come!

2. But there is something more than the condemnation of the world from which Christ came to deliver us by giving himself for our sins. There are the people of the world, the men and the women by whom we are surrounded and with whom we are so closely connected in the daily transactions of life. Mixture with them, to a certain extent, is unavoidable, as the demands of business indispensably require it. But there is a limit beyond which we must not go. We must not make the men and women of this world our friends and companions.

If I am found amongst transgressors, walking with them as my chosen friends and intimates, I shall have to endure the same punishment that falls upon them; for "*a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*" Pr 13:20 We often see this literally and naturally fulfilled. A companion of drunkards often kills himself with strong drink. A companion of thieves, as approving of their deeds, and connected with them in their employment, if he himself is not actually a pick-pocket, yet is liable to be imprisoned as a vagabond. Why is he in such company-why is he aiding them in their nefarious pursuits if he is not an accomplice? Just so it will be with us if we are found in life and death friends and associates with the world: we shall be shut up in hell with those who are actually guilty of the crimes perpetrated in the world, even though we ourselves have not sinned as they have. As our company is, so will be our judgment. If we walk in the counsel of the ungodly and stand in the way of sinners, we shall be judged with them; if on the other hand, from love to the Lord and to his people, we keep company with them, we shall have a share in their blessings.

Let us never forget that the Lord Jesus Christ came to deliver us from all company with his enemies, and to bring us into union with himself and his friends. Indeed I believe that one of the first marks of the grace of God in the soul, is the separation which it produces between us and those who have hitherto been our chief friends and associates. The work of God upon the heart is decisive work. It tolerates no half measures; it allows no compromise. It creates, from the very first, a gulf between the world and us that we never want to bridge over, never wish to be filled up, but are only desirous that the gulf should be daily wider and wider, and the separation greater and greater. I hope I can truly say, for my part, that I neither have nor wish to have one worldly friend or associate. May I ever be separate from all such, and may I live and die in the sweet and sole fellowship of the saints of God.

3. But there is a deliverance also from the customs and maxims of the world. And Christ gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the power and prevalence of these maxims and customs, for they are altogether evil. What are they but the advancement of self? "Let me rise, whoever sinks"- is not this the world's motto? As in a crowded place when there is a sudden alarm of fire and men are struggling for life, the strong will trample down the weak to save themselves: so in the grand struggle of life, the spirit of the world is to trample down all and any that may stand in its way in order to advance itself. "Self! Self! Self!" is the world's battle cry. "Let me swim, I care not who sinks. Let me rise, I care not who falls. Let me get safe to shore, and those who cannot swim, let the tide sweep them away; it will be all the better for me." Men may not be so daring as to utter these expressions but they embody the secret thoughts of every worldly heart.

Now to deliver us from such ungodly maxims and such selfish ways, Christ gave himself; for in giving himself for our sins, the purpose of his heart was not merely to

save but also to sanctify. He came to deliver us from the world within as well as the world without, that through his dying love and atoning blood, a new heart and a new spirit might be communicated to us, so that we might not be ever seeking the advancement of self, might not be ever bent upon gratifying our pride, ambition, and covetousness; but that the profit of our soul should be to us of far deeper importance than the profit of our bodies, the prosperity of our circumstances or the advancement of our families; that we should hate and abhor that spirit of selfishness which is the very life blood of a worldly heart; that the salvation and sanctification of our soul, should be our first concern; and next to that, as far as we can, to do good to the bodies and souls of our fellow-men.

4. Our Lord, therefore, gave himself for our sins that he might also deliver us from the spirit of the world. And where is that spirit? In our own bosom we need not dread the company and maxims of the world without, if we had not so much of the spirit of the world within. It is because we carry so much combustible material in our bosom, that we are justly afraid of fire. If I could live in a fire-proof house, I need not fear my neighbour's house being in flames; but if mine be a thatched cottage I may well tremble when the flame draws near my habitation. So it is in grace. If I were perfectly holy, had no evil heart, knew nothing of sin in the flesh, I need not dread contact with the world. But because I carry in my bosom that world within which is but the counterpart and image of the world without, I need dread the influence, and as it were the very breath of the world upon me: for the spirit of the world, if it once catch my thoughts and affections, may soon set on fire every evil in my heart.

But our blessed Lord gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the spirit of the world by giving us a new spirit, making us partakers of a divine nature whereby we escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust. We should ever bear in mind that our blessed Lord in giving himself for our sins that he might deliver us from the present evil world, did something more than merely rescue us from death and hell, or merely save us from the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. Salvation from the wrath to come is something more than a mere escape from hell. This might have been done, and yet had nothing else been accomplished grace would have fallen very far short of our deep necessities.

But Jesus died and rose again that he might bring us near to his own bosom, conform us to his own image, make us partakers of his own grace, give us to drink of and into his own Spirit, that we might receive those communications out of his own fulness which will make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It was God's eternal purpose that the spouse and bride of his dear Son should not only be rescued from all the sins and miseries of the Adam fall, but should be exalted far beyond what she was in her primeval creation. She is to shine forth one day in the eternal glory of his own dear Son, as he said in his intercessory prayer for his disciples, "*The glory which thou gavest me I have given them that they may be one even as we are one.*" Joh 17:22 This glory is twofold-present and future. The present glory is to be conformed to his suffering image, and by beholding him to be changed into it by the power of the Spirit, as the Apostle speaks, "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" 2Co 3:18 Future glory is to be perfectly conformed to his present glorified image in body and soul.

But as we shall only be glorified with him hereafter if we suffer with him here, so there must be an inward conformity to his suffering image upon earth, that there may be a perfect conformity to his glorified image in heaven. Calvary then is the source whence these healing streams flow; for Jesus is of God made unto us "sanctification" as well as "righteousness and redemption." The king's daughter is "*all glorious within*" as well as without in "*her clothing of wrought gold*" Ps 45:13 The inward glory consists in the transforming efficacy of the blessed Spirit in the heart, through which, being delivered from conformity to this world, we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

III.-But now comes our next point, which is to show that the whole of this work of Christ upon the cross, whereby he gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, is "*according to the will of our God and our Father.*" It is a blessed contemplation of a believing heart to see and feel how the whole work of Christ, in saving and sanctifying his redeemed people, harmonises with the eternal and sovereign will of God; for this foundation truth is deeply engraven upon every regenerate heart, that nothing can take place in heaven or earth but what is in accordance with the sovereign will of Jehovah. He is the supreme arbiter of all events, and doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

It is sweet, then, to see by faith that the Son of God giving himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, was in full accordance with the will of God. The will of the Father and the will of the Son must be one; but it is sweet to see that he against whom and before whom we have sinned, should be so well pleased with the sacrifice which Jesus has offered for our sins, and that all this was settled in eternal covenant. It mightily strengthens faith, hope, and love to be graciously persuaded that our Lord did not, so to speak, drag the pardon of our sins out of God's bosom; did not prevail with his heavenly Father by tears and supplications to let him come down from heaven to save guilty man, but that in this wondrous scheme of redeeming love, as in everything else, the will of the Father and of the Son were one.

To think that Jesus wrung the gift of eternal life out of God's unwilling breast would be to introduce contradiction into the courts of bliss, to make a schism between the Father and the Son, and to overthrow the whole fabric of the covenant of grace. It was the Father's good pleasure, it was the Son's good pleasure, it was the Holy Spirit's good pleasure; for these three, though distinct in Person, are one in essence. What pleased the Father, well pleased the Son, and what pleased the Son well pleased the Spirit; so that the whole of this wondrous scheme of salvation was in harmony with the will and purpose of God and our Father as our Father in Christ. "*The gift of God is eternal life,*" and though this is "*through Jesus Christ our Lord,*" that is, through the suffering, bloodshedding, and death of Jesus, this very channel through which it comes only enhances the greatness of the gift. A view of this by faith opens a door in the valley of Achor for every poor, desponding child of God; and, as viewed by faith, discovers a most suitable and blessed way of access to God himself.

You feel yourself to be a poor, vile, miserable sinner, you see yourself surrounded with evil within and without, as having your lot cast in an evil world; you long for an escape from all wrath and fear, doubt, terror, and torment; but you lift up your eyes and scarcely know where to look; you stretch forth your hands and scarcely know

whom to grasp; you move forward, but scarcely know where to direct your steps. Now look up once more and see whether you cannot see a light from heaven that even now shines upon your mind. Listen with outstretched ears if you cannot hear a voice from heaven itself that even now speaks to your heart. And what does that voice say? "The Son of God gave himself for your sins, that he might deliver you from this present evil world; and this is according to the will of God and our Father." Here, then, is a guiding light that shines upon the pilgrim's path; here is a directing voice that leads his footsteps into the ways of peace and truth. It is true that we must not expect to see an actual light or hear a real voice; but we see light in God's light when we believe, and we hear his voice when faith is mixed with his word.

When, then, as led by the blessed Spirit, we go to the blessed Redeemer that he may deliver us from this present evil world, by the application of his blood and the communication of his love, we go to him thus in accordance with the will of God and our Father. This is our heavenly warrant. If we believe in his name, it is in accordance with the will of God and our Father. If we hope in his mercy, if we love him with a pure heart fervently, if we cast our soul upon him, if, distrusting our own strength and righteousness we hang entirely upon his, we are acting according to the will of God and our Father; we are complying with the dictates of sovereign wisdom, listening to the voice of sovereign mercy, and walking in the ways of eternal truth and peace.

Thus, that the whole work of Christ with all its blessed fruits and effects, should be "*according to the will of God and our Father,*" casts a blessed and glorious light upon the original gift of the Son by the Father. The whole is thus seen to be one grand, glorious, and complete scheme of eternal wisdom and love. As thus enlightened by the blessed Spirit and renewed in the spirit of our mind, we see that God has designed and executed a way whereby we may be delivered from this present evil world.

Is it to you an evil world? Do you "*sigh and cry*" like those spoken of in Ezekiel , **Eze 9:4** "*for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof*" not only in the evil world without, but in the worse evil world within? There is a way of escape for you; there is a door of hope open in the very dome of heaven. Mercy whispers to you from the seat of heavenly bliss, "*The Son of God gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God.*" When this message of mercy and truth is received into a believing heart, and the inmost spirit begins to soften and melt under the sweet sound of pardoning love, it will bring out of the heart and lip our fourth and last point which is,

**IV.**— "*To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.*" Is he not worthy of all glory? O, what a glorious scheme to save guilty man as contrived in heaven and accomplished on earth! O, what a glorious plan of infinite wisdom to harmonise all the jarring perfections of Deity in the salvation of wretches so forlorn, of sinners so thoroughly lost! O, glorious contrivance, that mercy and truth should meet together in a suffering Immanuel, that peace and righteousness should kiss each other over Calvary's cross; that God should be just and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; and all this that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord; that sin might be pardoned and the sinner go free, and yet God's justice not be tarnished, but rather shine forth with re-doubled lustre. Is not then a triune Jehovah worthy of all the glory that myriads of saved sinners can render to his holy name?

Can that heart ever have tasted of his grace-can that soul ever have seen his glory, that withholds this triumphant note and denying him the glory due to his name, says, "Glory to myself; glory to my own wisdom, my own righteousness and my own exertions?" Is that a note to be heard in heaven? Will self-righteousness ever chant its discordant sounds in the heavenly choir? No; as in the temple, when "*the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord*" ,2Ch 5:13 so will it be in the courts of bliss when ransomed souls assemble round the throne and cry, "*Glory, glory, glory, for ever and ever, to Father, Son and Holy Ghost;*" and heaven's vaults will re-echo with the universal cry "Amen."