

PROCLAMATION OF ACCEPTANCE AND VENGEANCE

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To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn-Isaiah 61:2.

We know that this Scripture speaks concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We say not this as if we relied upon our own opinion, we know it of a surety from the Lord's own lips, for, reading this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." It is Jesus of Nazareth whom the Lord hath anointed to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, and our text tells us that He was also sent to make a proclamation which should usher in the year of acceptance and the day of vengeance.

Notice well the expression, to proclaim, because a proclamation is the message of a king, and where the word of a king is there is power. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to announce the will of the King of kings. He saith, "I am come in my Father's name," and again, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." Every word of the gospel is backed by the authority of "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," and he who rejects it is guilty of treason against Jehovah, God of all. The gospel is not of the nature of a commonplace invitation or human exhortation, which may be accepted or refused at will without involving guilt; but it is a divine proclamation, issued from the throne of the Eternal, which none can reject without becoming thereby rebels against the Infinite Majesty. Now if it be

so, let us give the divine edict our most earnest attention, and take heed what we hear. When a proclamation is issued by the head of a state, all good citizens gather around to read what has been said to them, and to know what the supreme law may be: and so, when God proclaims His will, all right-hearted men desire to know what it is, and what bearing it has upon them, what the Lord demandeth or what the Lord promiseth and what is their share therein. Beloved hearers, listening to the gospel should always be very solemn work, since it is listening to the Word of God. Though the voice is that of man yet the truth is of God; I pray you do not trifle with it.

Nor let it be forgotten that a proclamation must be treated with profound respect, not merely by receiving attention to its contents, but by gaining obedience to its demands. God does not speak to us by His Son that we may be gratified by hearing the sound of His voice, but that we may yield to His will. We are not to be hearers only, but doers of the Word. We should be quick in obedience to the command of the proclamation, swift in acceptance of its promise, and cheerful in submission to its demand. Who shall resist the proclamations of Jehovah? Is He not our Creator and King? Who is stubborn enough to refuse obedience? Or who hath brazen face enough to dispute His sway? Shall not He who made heaven and earth, and shaketh them when He pleaseth, and will destroy them at His pleasure, be regarded with reverential awe by the creatures of His hand? O Son of God, since it is a divine proclamation which Thou dost publish, send forth thy Holy Spirit that we may receive it with deepest reverence and lowliest obedience, lest, through our neglect, we do despite to Thee as well as to thy Father. When a proclamation is not made by an ordinary herald, but when the Prince Himself comes forth to declare His Father's will, then should all hearts be moved to sevenfold attention. It is the Son of God, anointed by the Spirit of God, who acts as herald unto us, and so by each person of the divine Trinity we are called upon to bow a listening ear and an obedient heart to what the Lord proclaims. Attention, then! The Messenger of the Covenant makes proclamation! Attention for the King of kings!

With this as a preface, let me notice, that there are three points in the proclamation worthy of our best attention: the first is the acceptable year; the next, the vengeance day; and the third, the comfort derived from both—"to comfort all that mourn."

I. Jesus, in the first place, proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. Take the expression to pieces and it comes to this—the year of the Lord, and the year of acceptance.

Now, what was the year of the Lord? There can be, I think, very little question that this relates to the jubilee year. Every seventh year was the Lord's year, and it was to be a sabbath of rest to the land; but the seventh seventh year, the fiftieth year, which the Lord reserved unto Himself, was in a very marked and especial sense the year of the Lord. Now, our Lord Jesus has come to proclaim a period of jubilee to the true seed of Israel. The seed of Abraham now are not the seed according to the law, but those who are born after the promise. There are privileges reserved for Israel after the flesh, which they will yet receive in the day when they shall acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah; but every great blessing which was promised to Abraham's seed after the flesh is now virtually promised to Israel after the Spirit, to those who by faith are the children of believing Abraham.

Now, beloved, to all who believe, our Lord Jesus proclaims a year of jubilee. Let us dwell upon the four privileges of the jubilee, and accept with delight the proclamation which our Lord has made.

In the year of jubilee, as we read in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, there was a release of all persons who had sold themselves for servants. Pinched by great poverty, and unable to meet their debts, it sometimes happened that men were compelled to say to their creditor, "Take us and our wives and children, and accept our services instead of money. We have no goods or chattels, and our land has been mortgaged long ago, but here we are; we cannot pay in any other way—give us food and raiment and lodging, and we will put ourselves under apprenticeship to you." The law of Moses ordained that such persons were not to be treated harshly, nor regarded as slaves, but as hired servants, but still it must have been an unpleasant condition of servitude for a freeborn Israelite. How happy then was the morning when the jubilee trumpet sounded, and the generous law came into operation which said, "He shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee, but then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him." From that moment he owed no more service, however great his debt might have been; he looked upon his wife and children and rejoiced that they were all his own and all free from the yoke, so that they could at once return to the possession of their fathers, all live in the cottage in which they

formerly dwelt, and enjoy the piece of land which they formerly called their own. Liberty, that gladsome sound, liberty had come to them; no matter that they had long been under obligations to the creditor, those obligations ceased on the sound of the sacred trumpet. Beloved souls now present, proclamation is made to you in the Lord's name that if you are under bondage to sin and to sinful habits, there is liberty for you; faith in Jesus will set you free. If you are in bondage under justice and the broken law there is deliverance. If you are under bondage through fear of death, or from the rage of Satan, our divine Lord and Master has come into the world on purpose to break these bonds in sunder, and to proclaim liberty to the captives. Ye need be bound no longer; if ye believe in Jesus ye are bound no longer, but ye are set free from all the bondage of the law, from the slavery of Satan and from the dread of death. Take the liberty which the great Lord freely presents to you, and be no longer slaves. Jesus has brought in redemption and finished atonement, and believers are free; come and rejoice therein.

The next jubilee blessing was the redemption of alienated possessions. Every man had his own plot of ground in the Holy Land, but through the pressure of the times it sometimes happened that a man alienated his property: he was in need of ready money, his children wanted bread to eat, and he, therefore, parted with his land. It was gone: the vines and the figtrees, the corn and the oil, passed over to another; but it was not gone forever, he had no power to sell beyond the year of jubilee. When this joyful morning dawned he went back to his family estate; it was all his own again, clear of all encumbrances; the little homestead, and the farmyard, and the fields, and the garden, all had come back to him, and none could dispute his right. Just so my Lord and Master declares to all who believe in Him that the estate which Adam forfeited is restored to all for whom the Second Adam died. The alienated heritage is our own again. The great Father's love, and favor, and care, yea, all things, whether things present or things to come, or life or death, all are ours, and we are Christ's and Christ is God's. If we are believers, and we are of the true seed of Israel, this day the Lord Jesus proclaims to us a restoration of all the lost privileges and blessings which originally belonged to manhood. Behold, believers, all covenant blessings are yours, rejoice in them! Partake of heavenly blessings freely. Let your soul rejoice in its portion, and delight itself in fatness.

It followed, also, as a third blessing of the year of the Lord that all debts were discharged. The man who had sold himself had, as it were, made a

composition of his debts by the sale of himself, and this implied a full and final discharge at the jubilee. The person also who had mortgaged his land up to the jubilee year had discharged his debts thereby, and when the man received back himself and his property, no further liability rested upon him, he was cleared of all charges. The jubilee did not give the man back himself and his land under a reserve, but unreservedly. If debt had still been due the release would have been a mere farce, since he would have had to mortgage his land and sell himself again directly to meet the demand. No, there was a full discharge, a canceling of all debts, a removal of all encumbrances upon the man and upon his estate, and he was free. What a joy this must have been! He who is in debt is in danger; a honest man sleeps on a hard bed till he has paid what he owes. He who is immersed in debt is plunged in misery, driven to his wits' end, not knowing what to do. Happy is he that is delivered from debt once for all. Now behold, O believers in Jesus, your debts before the Lord are all discharged, the handwriting that was against you is nailed to the cross, receipted in the crimson lines of Jesus' precious blood. Being justified by faith ye are clear before the sight of the Eternal; none can lay anything to your charge. What joyful notes are these! Jesus makes the proclamation, who will not believe it and be glad?

A fourth blessing of the jubilee trumpet was rest. They had their lands, but they were not to till them for a year. No more the spade and the plow, the sickle and the flail—they were to put away instruments of labor, and rest for twelve months. Think of a whole year of perfect repose, wherein they might worship and adore God all the week round, make every day a holy festival, and the whole year a Sabbath of Sabbaths unto the Most High. Brethren, the Israelites had no small privileges under the ceremonial covenant, if they had lived up to it, but they failed to do so, for it has sometimes been questioned whether they ever kept a jubilee at all, and whether the Sabbatic year was ever once observed. If they had obeyed the Lord they would have been favored indeed: for in the matter of holidays and quiet resting times they were favored above all people. Think of one year in seven of absolute cessation from toil. What repose for them! And then they had also the year after the seventh seven, so that every man who reached the fiftieth year enjoyed two consecutive years of absolute rest from all labor, and yet knew no want, for the ground brought forth plentifully, and every man helped himself. Those who had land had a good store to last them through three years, and those who had none were fed by

the spontaneous produce of the soil. We live not under such laws, and if we did I am afraid we should not have the faith to trust in the Lord and avail ourselves of the divinely appointed holiday. But, beloved, we rest spiritually. He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into rest. Now no more does he strive to work out a righteousness of his own, for he has already a divine one, and needs no other. It is his pleasure to worship God, but he no longer trembles beneath His wrath; it is his delight to do His commandments, but he toils and frets no longer as a slave under the law; he has become a free man, and a beloved child, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps his heart and mind. Being justified by faith he has peace with God, and enjoys his influences of the divine Comforter whose indwelling gives rest to the soul.

The jubilee year, according to our text, was called “the year of the Lord”; and the reason for all the four jubilee blessings was found in the Lord. First, the servants were set free because God said, “they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 25:42). Ah, poor burdened soul, if thou believest in Christ thou shalt go free, for thou art the Lord’s own—His chosen, His redeemed, and therefore He claims thee, and will suffer no other lord to have dominion over thee. The devil seeks to lay an embargo upon thee, and hold thee a slave, but Jesus saith, “Let go my captives, for I have redeemed them with my blood.” Jesus claims you, O penitent souls; He cries to sin as once the Lord said to Pharaoh, “Thus saith the Lord, let my people go.” Jesus says of each repenting soul, “Loose him and let him go, for he is mine. My Father gave him to me—he is my chosen, my beloved. Neither sin nor Satan, nor death nor hell, shall hold him, for he is mine.”

The land also was set free for this same reason, for concerning it the Lord said, “The land is Mine” (Leviticus 25:23). The freehold of the land was vested in Jehovah Himself, consequently He ordained that no man should hold any portion of it by right of purchase beyond the fiftieth year, for the land was entailed and must go back to those for whom He had appointed it at the jubilee year. So the blessings of the everlasting covenant are God’s and therefore He appoints them unto you poor believing sinners, and you shall have them, for the divine decree shall not be frustrated. As surely as He appointed Christ to reign, and placed Him on the throne, so does He appoint you to reign with Him, and you shall sit upon His throne though all the devils in hell should say you nay.

So, too, the debts were all discharged, because on the day before the jubilee the great atonement had swept away all transgression and indebtedness towards God, and He would have His people forgive all the debts of their fellow men. All things are the Lord's and He exercised His crown rights on the day of jubilee so far as to declare all debts discharged. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" was the motto of the jubilee, and sufficient reason for the canceling of obligations between man and man.

As for rest, that came also, because it was God's year, and was hallowed unto the Lord. "A jubilee shall the fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field." During man's years the earth brings forth thorns and thistles, and man must earn his bread, with the sweat of his face; but when God's year comes then the wilderness and the solitary place are glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. When the Lord's own kingdom cometh then shall the earth yield her increase as she has never done before. My beloved, I trust you know the blessedness of living in God's year, for you live by faith upon His providence, casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. This is the Sabbath of the soul, the counterpart of heaven. You behold the work of atonement fully accomplished on your behalf, and know yourselves to be delivered from all your liabilities to the law, and therefore your heart leaps within you. You are clean, delivered, set free, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and therefore do you come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads.

But the text speaks also of the "acceptable year of the Lord." Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has come to proclaim to sinners the Lord's acceptance of guilty men through His great sacrifice. Apart from the work of our Lord Jesus, men as sinners are unacceptable to God. Some of you know the misery of being in that condition; it is horrible to feel that the Lord is weary of you and your vain oblations. Since you have come in your own name and righteousness, God has not accepted you, neither has He heard your prayers nor listened to your cries, nor had respect unto your religious observances, for He saith, "Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." If the Spirit of God has convinced you of your natural unacceptableness with God, you must have been brought into a very sad state indeed; for not to be accepted of God, and to be aware of it, is cause

for intense sorrow. But now be sure, thou that believest in Jesus, that thou art accepted of God: notwithstanding thine infirmities and sins thou art “accepted in the Beloved,” by Him who hath said, “I will accept you with your sweet savor.” And now, being thus accepted as to your persons, your petitions shall come up with acceptance before the Lord. As for your prayers, God heareth them; as for your tears, He putteth them into His bottle; as for your works, He counteth them to be fruits of His Spirit and accepts them. Yea, now that thou art accepted in Christ, all that thou art and all that thou hast, and all thou dost—the whole of thee is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thrice happy am I to have to talk upon such a subject as this. Come ye who are willing now to believe in Jesus, this is the acceptable year of the Lord; God is reconciled, man is favored, blessings abound. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Let sin be confessed and the confession shall be accepted, and you shall find forgiveness. Let transgression be repented of, the repentance shall be accepted, and you shall hear a voice saying, “Go and sin no more; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.” Hail! thou that art graciously accepted, blessed art thou among women! And thou too, my brother, remember the words of Solomon, “Go thy way, eat thy break with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works” (Ecc. 9:7). Come to Jesus by faith, for though you come with a limping walk, and your hearts and sorrowing spirits, come ye that are downcast and dare not look up, this is no common time, the Lord Jesus has made it a red letter year for you; for He proclaims a year of grace and acceptance. Behold in this *anno Domini*, or year of our Lord, we have a choice year of grace set apart for us. Who will not come to our gracious Prince, accept His mercy, and live?

Thus you see we get a double meaning from the text—the year of jubilee with all its accumulated privileges of free grace, and the year of acceptance in which whosoever will may come, and God will accept him if he cometh in the name of Jesus, trusting alone in the atoning blood.

II. May the Lord help us while we speak upon the second part of the text: the “day of vengeance of our God.” Does not the sound of vengeance grate upon your ear? Does it not seem discordant to the sweet tenor of the passage? Vengeance! Shall that happen side by side with acceptance? Yes, beloved, this is the mystery of the gospel; the system of redemption marries justice and mercy; the method of suretyship unites severity and grace; the

economy of substitution blends acceptance and vengeance. This gospel mystery is to be published to every creature under heaven, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. We sweetly sang just now:

*Here I behold his innermost heart,
Where grace and vengeance strangely join,
Piercing his Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased pleasure mine.*

Now behold in this text you have the heart of God laid bare, for you have the year of acceptance coupled with the day of vengeance. Let us explain this strange commingling, and at the same time expound the text.

In the first place, whenever there is a day of mercy to those who believe, it is always a day of responsibility to those who reject it, and if they continue in that state it is a day of increased wrath to unbelievers. It is not possible for the gospel to be without some effect. If it be a savor of life unto life to those who receive it, it must of necessity from its own intrinsic vigor be a savor of death unto death to those who reject it. To this sword there are two edges—one will kill our fears, or the other will surely kill our pride and destroy our vain hopes if we yield not to Christ. You may, perhaps, have noticed that when our Lord read this passage at Nazareth, He stopped short, He did not read it all; He read as far down as, “to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” and then He closed the book and gave it to the minister and sat down. I suppose that at the commencement of His ministry, before He had been rejected by the nation, and before He had suffered for sin, He wisely chose to allude to the gentler topics rather than to those more stern and terrible ones; but He did not conclude His ministry without referring to the stern words which followed those which He had read. If you will turn to Luke’s twenty-first chapter you will find Him saying in the twenty-first and twenty-second verses, “Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” You know the story of the siege of Jeru-salem, the most harrowing of all narratives, for the anger of God was concentrated upon that wicked city beyond all precedent. It was because they rejected Christ that vengeance came upon them. They filled up the measure of their iniquity when at last they disowned their king and cried out, “Away with him, away with him, let him be crucified.” Mark you then, dear hearer, that

if you have heard the gospel and rejected it, you have incurred great guilt, and you can never sin so cheaply as you did before; for you there will be a day of vengeance above the men of Sodom and Gomorrha, because you have perpetrated a crime which they were not capable of committing—you have rejected the Christ of God. The year of acceptance to believers will be a day of vengeance to those who obey not His gospel.

Another meaning of the text comes out in the fact that there is appointed a day of vengeance for all the enemies of Christ, and this will happen in that bright future day for which we are looking. Note merely for rejecters of His gospel will there be ven-geance, but for all men and fallen spirits who dare to oppose His sway. Behold He comes a second time; every winged hour hastens His advent, and when He comes it will be a great and a dreadful day to His foes. It will be to His saints the day of their revelation, manifestation, and acceptance, but to the ungodly “the day of vengeance of our God.” “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” Paul also bears witness the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” Note the vengeance and the grace combined. The prophet Isaiah saw our great champion returning from his last fight, and thus spoke concerning him: “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine vat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”

Observe, again, the connection between the day of vengeance and the year of the redeemed. At the second advent Christ will come to be glorified in His saints, and they shall be manifested in the fullness of their acceptance,

but it will be an overwhelming day of vengeance for all those who have hardened their hearts and continued in their sins. “Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

However, I consider that the chief meaning of the text lies in this—that “the day of vengeance of our God” was that day when He made all the transgressions of His people to meet upon the head of our great Surety. Sin with many streams had been flowing down the hills of time and forming by their dread accumulation one vast and fathomless lake. Into this the sinner’s substitute must be plunged. He had a baptism to be baptized with and He must endure it, or all His chosen must perish forever. That was a day of vengeance when all the waves and billows of divine wrath went over His innocent head.

*Came at length the dreadful night;
Vengeance with its iron rod
Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God.
See, my soul, thy Savior see,
Prostrate in Gethsemane!*

From His blessed person there distilled a bloody sweat, for His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. All through the night with scourgings and buffetings and spittings of cruel men, He was tortured and abused; He was rejected, despised, maltreated, and pierced in His inmost soul by man’s scorn and cruelty. Then in the morning He was taken out to be crucified, for nothing could suffice short of His death. The outward sorrows of crucifixion ye know, but the inward griefs ye do not know, for what our Lord endured was beyond what any mortal man could have borne. The infinity of the Godhead aided the manhood, and I doubt not Hart was right in saying that He

*Bore all Incarnate God could bear
With strength enough but none to spare.*

It was an awful “day of vengeance of our God,” for the voice cried aloud, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.” The doctrine that justice was executed upon our great Substitute is the most important that was ever propounded in the hearing of men; it is the sum and substance of the whole gospel, and I fear

that the church which rejects it is no longer a church of Christ. Substitution is as much a standing or falling article in the church as the doctrine of justification by faith itself. My brethren and sisters, there would never have been an acceptable year if there had not been a day of vengeance. Be ye sure of this.

And now let us look at the instructive type by which this truth was taught to Israel of old. The year of jubilee began with the day of atonement. "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." What did the high priest do on that day? Read for yourselves the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus. On that day he washed himself and came forth before the people, not wearing his breast-plate, nor his garments of glory and beauty, of blue and scarlet and fine linen; but the high priest wore the ordinary linen garments of a common priest. Even thus the Lord, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, laid aside all His glory, and was found in fashion as a man. Then the priest took a bullock and, having offered it, went within the veil with the censer full of burning coals of fire, and sweet incense beaten small, with which he filled the inner court with perfumed smoke. After this he took the blood of the bullock and sprinkled it before the mercy-seat seven times. Thus our Lord entered within the veil with His own blood and with the sweet incense of His own merits, to make atonement for us. Of the two goats, one was killed as a sin-offering, and his blood was sprinkled within the veil, and the other was used for a scapegoat. Upon the head of the scapegoat Aaron laid both his hands, and confessed all the iniquities of the children of Israel, "putting them upon the head of the goat," which was then taken into the wilderness as the type of the carrying away of sin into oblivion. Do you not see your Lord and Master bearing your sin away? "As far as the east is from the west, so far that he removed our transgressions from us." Is there any wonder that a jubilee of peace should follow such a taking away of iniquity as our great High-priest has accomplished? Jesus is entered into the heavens for us, can we doubt of our acceptance with God.

The bodies of the beasts whose blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin on the day of atonement were not suffered to remain in the holy place, but were carried forth without the camp to be utterly consumed with fire, in token that sin is loathsome in the sight of God, and must be put away from His presence. Even thus did our Lord suffer without the gate and cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "Christ also hath once

suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” All this was absolutely needful to a jubilee. Without atonement, no rejoicing. Before there can be acceptance for a single sinner, sin must be laid on Jesus and carried away. The blood of Jesus must be shed, and must be presented within the veil, for “without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin”; for no man living under heaven can there be pardon or acceptance with God in any way but by the bloody sacrifice which our Redeemer offered when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost on Calvary. This great truth we must never becloud, nor ever cease to publish so long as we have a tongue to move.

The day of vengeance then is intimately connected with the year of acceptance; and mark, beloved, they must be so connected experimentally in the heart of all God’s people by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, for whenever Christ comes to make us live, the law comes first to kill us. There is no healing without previous wounding. Depend upon it, there never will be a sense of acceptance in any man until first he has had a sense of the just and righteous vengeance of God against his sin. Have you noticed that remarkable parallel to our text in the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, where salvation and vengeance are so closely joined? There we read in the third verse and onward, “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” O poor trembling convinced sinner, God has come with vengeance to you, but His intent is to save you. Every soul that is saved must feel that wrath is deserved and that the death punishment is due on account of sin, and when this is known and felt acceptance by faith will follow. There must be a death blow struck at all self-sufficiency and self-righteousness, and the man must be laid as dead at the feet of Christ before ever he will look up and find life and healing in the great atoning sacrifice. When our Lord puts on the helmet of salvation, He also girds about Him the garments of vengeance, and we must see Him in all His array. (See Isaiah 59:17). The day of vengeance is a needful companion to the year of acceptance; have they gone together in your experience?

III. I wish time would occasionally stay his rapid flight, or at least allow us to pluck a feather from his wing while we contemplate such a subject as this. But I must close with the third head, namely the comfort for mourners derivable from both these things. "To comfort all that mourn."

Now, I have no hope of interesting, much less of doing any good to, any in this house of prayer who do not come under the description of mourners. The sower's duty is to sow the seed everywhere, but he knows within himself that it will take no root anywhere except where the plow has been first at work. If the Lord has made thee a mourner then the blessed subject of this morning will comfort thee; but the Lord never comforts those who do not want comfort. If you can save yourself, go and do it: if you are righteous, "he that is righteous let him be righteous still." I say it in sarcasm, as you perceive, for you cannot save yourself, nor are you righteous; but if you think so, go your way and try it-vainly try it, for surely when you have fanned your best works into a flame, and have walked by the light of the sparks of the fire which you have kindled, you shall have this at the Lord's hands-you shall lie down in sorrow and be astonished that you were ever so mad as to dream of self-salvation or of justification by your own works.

But oh, ye mourners, what joy is here, joy because this is the year of acceptance, and in the year of acceptance, or jubilee, men were set free and their lands were restored without money. No man ever paid a penny of redemption money on the jubilee morning: every man was free simply because jubilee was proclaimed: no merit was demanded, no demur was offered, no delay allowed, no dispute permitted. Jubilee came, and the bondman was free. And now, today, whosoever believeth in Jesus is saved, pardoned, freed, without money, without merit, without preparation, simply because he believeth, and God declareth that he that believeth is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Dost thou believe? Then art thou of the house of Israel, and thou hast God's warrant for it, thou art free. Rejoice in thy liberty! Surely this is sweet comfort for all that mourn. Look not for any marks and evidences, signs and tokens, look not for any merits or attainments, look not for any progress in grace or advancement in piety as a ground of salvation; listen only to the proclamation of the gospel, and accept the divine decree which ordains a jubilee. Art thou but of the chosen seed, dost thou believe in Jesus, then for thee it is an accepted year. Come, bring hither thy griefs and

sorrows, and leave them at the cross, for the Lord accepts thee, and who shall say thee nay?

An equal joy-note however rings out from the other sentence concerning the day of vengeance. If the day of vengeance took place when our Lord died, then it is over. The day of vengeance was past and gone eighteen hundred years ago and more.

*Now no more His wrath we dread,
Vengeance smote our Surety's head;
Legal claims are fully met,
Jesus paid the dreadful debt.*

My heart, dost thou bleed for sin and mourn because of it? Be it so; but it has ceased to be, for Christ made an end of it when He took it up to His cross and bore it there in His own body on the tree. O believer, art thou bowed down and troubled on account of past sin? It is right thou shouldst repent, but still remember thy past sin exists no more, the pen is drawn through it and it is canceled, for the day of vengeance is over. God will not twice take vengeance for the same sin. Either the atonement which Jesus offered was enough, or it was not; if it was not, then woe be to us, for we shall die; but if it was sufficient-if "It is finished" was not a lie but a truth, then He hath "finished transgression and made an end of sin." The sin of the believer is annihilated and abolished, and can never be laid to his charge. Let us rejoice that the day of vengeance is over, and the year of acceptance has begun.

In another sense, however, it may be that some are mourning because of the temptations of Satan. Here, too, they may be comforted, for Jesus has come to take vengeance on the evil one, and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Are you afraid of death? Behold Christ has taken revenge on death, for He bids you cry, because of His resurrection, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Are we mourning today because our dear ones are not converted? It is a good thing to mourn on that account, but let us take comfort, for this is an acceptable year; let us pray for them, and the Lord will save them. Are we mourning because sin is rampant in the wide world? Let us rejoice, for our Lord has broken the dragon's head, and the day of vengeance must come when the Lord will overthrow the powers of darkness. Have we been looking with mournful spirit upon old Rome, and the Mohammedan

imposture, and the power of Buddhism and Brahminism and other the sway of ancient idolatries? Let us be glad. Behold the Avenger cometh! He comes a second time, and comes conquering and to conquer. Then shall the day of his vengeance be in his heart, and the year of His redeemed shall come. From the seven hills the deceiver shall be torn, no more to curse the sons of men with his pretensions to be the vicar of God. In blackest night shall set forever the crescent of Mohammed, which already wanes; its baleful light shall no more afflict unhappy nations. Then shall fall the gods of the Hindus and the Chinese, broken like potters' vessels by the rod of iron which Jesus wields. At His appearing the whole earth shall acknowledge that He who was "despised and rejected of men" is "King of kings and Lord of lords." Behold, the day cometh on apace, let all that mourn be comforted. The day of vengeance, the full year of the millennial glory, the day of the overthrow of error, the year of the acceptance of creation in all her former beauty, the age when God shall be all in all, is near at hand. Hasten it, O Lord. Amen.