

boldly rushing on the thick bosses of his buckler. The manifestation of his displeasure followed. The old serpent the devil, was permitted to inject into the guilty pair the dreadful venom of sin, which was hastening them down to the chambers of eternal death. Their posterity have all followed their criminal example, and therefore have shared their penalty. Hence crowds have "died the death," and all would eventually have been numbered with them, had not Christ been lifted up for their deliverance.

Here, therefore, all of us are reminded of our natural condition: the virus of sin was working death in us. Whether we are willingly ignorant of this awful fact or not; it is a fact in reference to every one of us. We were once dying by sin; and still are we dying if we have not had recourse to the heavenly instituted remedy, as we soon shall learn, if we persist in closing our eyes to our danger, by the terrible experience of the pains of the second death.

## II. *The peculiarities of its nature.*

These were as follows:—

1. The brazen serpent was *expressly appointed by God* as the remedy for Israel's wounds. "Jehovah said unto Moses: make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole."

And who appointed Jesus to his saving office? Man? He never could have thought of such a remedy, much less could he have procured it. It was provided and presented by the offended sovereign, who might well have abandoned dying men to the perdition which they had brought upon themselves. "God so loved the world that *He* gave his only begotten son." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as a propitiation for our sins." "He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," though "taken by wicked hands and slain."

Here is not only a display of sovereign and amazing love, that should excite our most grateful wonder; but a ground of confidence that will more than justify our most unwavering faith in the efficacy of the Saviour's death; for what divine wisdom and goodness have appointed cannot but secure the end of its appointment. Nor is there in this fact

less reason for alarm if we despise the Saviour; for in doing so we despise not man but despise God, and involve ourselves in the fresh and aggravated guilt of the vilest ingratitude and most bold presumption.

2. The brazen serpent was an *apparently unsuitable* remedy for Israel's case. Had they been commanded to use some medicine or to make some external application to their wounds, they would have been able to discover some adaptation in the prescription to the malady. But human wisdom asks with incredulous astonishment, if not contempt: "what beneficial influence can a piece of brass exert upon the wounded?" Its incredulity increases when it learns from the testimony (whether true or false) of naturalists, that the sight of polished brass augments the virulence of poison injected by a serpent's bite.

Equally unfit does Jesus seem to fallen reason for the accomplishment of man's salvation. Had he been some mighty potentate swaying the sceptre of sovereign power, and clothed in robes of royal pomp; or some profound philosopher skilled in the knowledge of human nature and possessing an acquaintance with some new mystery of moral science, we might have readily admitted his ability to help us. But how can he, who was a wailing babe brought forth in a stable and laid in a manger—a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, not having where to lay his head—crucified as a malefactor—a victim of the king of terrors—how can such an one be the Saviour of the world? What power or authority can such an one possess to close for us the gates of hell and open for us the portals of the skies? It was not at all surprising that he was to the carnal Jews a stumbling block, and to the philosophizing Greeks foolishness.

Why this seeming want of adaptation in a remedy provided by infinite wisdom? One chief reason was to give occasion for our implicit faith in God. Both the sin of Israel and men in general materially involves, and is principally based upon, confidence in our own wisdom and in creatures, and a want of confidence in God. Had the means of our salvation been such as that we could easily have seen their fitness to