

Our eternal destiny—an unchanging character of good, or evil, and an unchanging condition of weal or woe—is a result or consequence of what we gain or lose in time.

Like to our fellow-men scattered over the face of the whole earth, of-whom it cannot be said that there is one just, and who sinneth not. Like to the generations who have preceded us, back to our common ancestors who apostatized from God, We are alienated from the Holy one—excluded from paradise we see no Eden here—We find that “although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” Laden with sin, oppressed and harassed oft by guilt and misery together, yet blind, careless, reckless, impenitent, we are unworthy to live, and unprepared to die. We are unable to answer in judgment, and unqualified to enter heaven. Dry fuel, fit material for the all-devouring fire! Such are we all in our natural state now. Such—till we experience a gracious change—till we are born again, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,”

But the Lord has refrained from visiting in strict requital. He looked in pity on the rebellious and ruined race. He remembered that ‘they were but fading flesh.’ He knew the fearful consequences of sin, and “in the good pleasure of his goodness,” He laid the sinner’s help upon a “mighty one,” and sent His own eternal Son to be the Redeemer and King of a people saved by grace.

He sent Jesus to be “the light of the world”—to illustrate the known, and to reveal unknown truth, to inform men of God’s good will, and His longing for their return to Him, and His readiness to draw, help, and receive them to his gracious favour.

He sent Jesus as the Messenger of the new covenant, to ratify it with his blood to assure men of its betterness, to invite

them on its ground, to awe them, convict them, melt them, and satisfy them by the greatness of the sacrifice with which it was sealed. He sent Jesus—made “Son of man,” our Brother—to speak to us as only a Brother with fellow-feeling could—to charge men that their Father in heaven designed that covenant’s blessings for them,—“the wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;”—and that in all this, while loving them himself, as no brother but Jesus could love, He was only discharging his duty as Mediator—only doing God’s will when he presented to them—to one, to all, to any sinner whatever, a complete salvation without price; and that he was determined, and able to save every rebel laying down his arms, and submitting to God’s righteousness, and accepting His grace.

Further, God who sent his Son in the first instance to bless us by turning us from iniquity, gave, and gives yet His Holy Spirit to enlighten man’s darkened intellect, and soften his hard heart, and bend his stubborn will;—to lead him as a penitent to the cross; as pardoned there to God’s family; as redeemed and adopted to holiness; and so transform the sin-ruined into a living soul, and seal it for Christ and heaven.

All this is of grace—all this is done in time. Our life term here is God’s “accepted time,” in which, if ever, we are to come to “know God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, whom to know is everlasting life.” “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.” “Work while it is to-day; the night cometh when no man can work.”—Now! then, if we are ever to be saved, we are to be saved from sin, and to fear and love, and serve our God. Now! if we are to have a dwelling-place with him in bliss, we are to be sanctified—set apart for God, and a holy, happy, eternal life.”