

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift in Jesus! He broke the power of sin, and took away the sting of death. It may be said, that, instead of resorting to the gospel method, God might, by a mighty miracle, have instantaneously redeemed the world from sin, and set his human offspring free of its power. But he is a wise Father as well as a loving one—a just God, as well as merciful. He would convince men of the sanctity of the divine law, and the weighty evil of transgression, by the magnitude of the method required to redeem. A Saviour is manifested—the well-beloved Son—sinless, yet suffering, and suffering on account of human transgression. Here is something to touch the heart and conscience, and move the sinner to penitence and return. And he calls on man to do his part in the great work—to work out his own salvation through the means which divine mercy has provided. Penitent and returning, he will receive him. This is the condition which God demands. Jesus disclosed the terms of reconciliation in his matchless parable of the prodigal son. Therein behold the method of atonement.

Thanks be to God, we say again, for his unspeakable gift in Jesus! Are there any who slight the gift? Men there were in a past age, and some there are in the present, who say that Christianity was before Christ. Their thought, here, is as shallow as their saying is paradoxical. Utterances of high moral and spiritual truth there were before the time of Jesus, both from Hebrew and Heathen, but there was no Christianity before Christ. Socrates and Seneca taught excellent morals, but Socrates and Seneca could not save the world.—They did not exemplify the life of God upon the earth, and set forth his love and mercy to men. What mark have they left upon the world compared with that of the Man of Nazareth? Christianity before Christ! Sunlight before the sun.

The mists rolled away when the star of Bethlehem appeared.—The smoke and cloud of Sinai departed. The morning of a new era dawned upon the world. It is our privilege to live under the gospel dispensation. But do we search ourselves sufficiently to know what use we make of its gracious and saving disclosures? Do we examine ourselves to understand whether its power, purity, and boundless love, are adequately felt and respected by us? Ah, our hollow, frivolous, and useless lives would rise up, I fear, to condemn many of us. Jesus appeared as our Saviour—the bearer of God's message of mercy. He spoke his heavenly words, and wrought his