

THE MASTER'S TRUMPET

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- From the Editors *page 2*
- Unction in Preaching *page 3*
Maurice Roberts
- The Spiritual Condition of the Ministry in Its
Influence on the People *page 9*
Alexander Moody Stuart
- The Administration of the Lord's Supper *page 18*
Sherman Isbell
- The Open Door of the House of Mercy *page 45*
Adam Gib

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The Open Door of the House of Mercy

Adam Gib

Adam Gib, "Concerning Arminian Errors upon the head of Universal Redemption," *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession-Testimony*, Edinburgh 1774.

IN THE ORIGINAL TRANSACTION OF THE NEW COVENANT, all the promises bear a special and particular direction to the elect,—all their names being, as it were, severally recorded therein; so that the promises, as there laid, are an expression of God's gracious purpose concerning each of them particularly, and them only: But the matter is far otherwise, in the administration of that Covenant by the Gospel. For the Gospel, as it were, brings forth an extract from that glorious original,—in which extract, the promises bear only an *indefinite* direction; a blank being left, where the names of the elect are recorded in the original; So that these promises, as laid out to men in the Gospel, do abstract from all regard to any as *elect*,—to any, more than others; or they have a respect to them only as *sinner*s, mankind sinners.

And these absolute promises to mankind sinners as such, in the Gospel, are not to be *immediately* considered as an expression of God's *purpose*, or as a declaring of what he will do, in the performance thereof; but they are to be immediately considered, as an expression of God's free *offer* so to do and perform: Which offer is freely and equally made to every hearer of the Gospel, warranting them all to apprehend and apply the promises by faith, and while the possession of all promised blessings, is to be certainly obtained in the way of believing,—the Lord never failing to sustain faith's appropriation of the promises, so as to perform the same unto all believers. Neither are these promises to be considered as an expression or declaration of God's *purposes* to any in particular, but as they come to be accepted and rested upon, or as persons are determined to fill up their names in the blank, by the hand of faith: Which all Gospel hearers are equally and immediately warranted to do, by God's offer and call.

Such then is the direction or endorsement which the absolute promises of justification and eternal life, through Christ, bear to mankind sinners indefinitely, in the Gospel: And such is the claim they have to these promises, a claim every way sufficient to faith, having no dependence on God's intention or design, as to whom the promises were originally made for. And seeing they make an exhibition of Christ to all Gospel-hearers,—in his person, offices, atonement and righteousness; or do bring him and his whole redemption to every sinner's door, in a full and free offer: This is a glorious foundation, a sufficient ground,—for the general call of the Gospel.

The particular objective destination and intention of our Lord's death, cannot belong to the ground of the Gospel call or of faith,—any more than *election* can do, while these are materially the same thing. As people are not to make any inquiry, whether they be among the elect, before they venture to believe in Christ: This is just the same thing, upon the matter, with saying,—that they are not to make any inquiry, whether they be among the persons for whom or in whose names Christ shed his blood, before they venture to receive and rest upon him in the Gospel offer.

In the case of a sinner's justification, "Law and justice have no respect to the particular objective destination or intention of Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, as any way belonging to the *pleadableness* thereof at the bar of law and justice." Which is the same thing as to say,—that the sinner is not to plead upon any *former purpose* of God or Christ concerning him, in the providing of this satisfaction and righteousness; but he is to plead upon the *thing itself*, as presently and freely exhibited to him in the gospel: And this plea is sustained at the bar of law and justice, so that he is acquitted there,—for the sake of this satisfaction and righteousness, not for the sake of any former purpose of God or Christ concerning him, in the providing thereof.

In whose behalf is it, that law and justice have a respect unto the justice-satisfying and law-magnifying nature of Christ's atonement and righteousness? Is it not in behalf of every mankind-sinner indifferently? But it is "in behalf of every sinner who is found betaking himself thereunto by faith, upon the divine warrant," (which has been explained), "as the same is *unto all and upon all them that believe*, without any difference." It is the express testimony of Scripture, and a most material testimony in the present case,—which, if duly considered, might be decisive of the whole controversy, that the New Covenant righteousness is *unto all and upon*

all them that believe, for there is no difference. At the bar of law and justice, no regard is paid to any difference among men, either from their outward characters in the world, or from God's foregoing determinations and appointments concerning them: No consideration is had of who were elected, or who in particular were the purposed and designed objects of our Lord's death. There is no further question at that bar,—but who are taking up their stand by faith, upon the glorious foundation of Christ's righteousness (including his atonement); and it is sustained for all such, unto their justification: It is *unto them* all, for the full benefit thereof; and it is *upon them* all, as their sufficient clothing,—their robe of righteousness.

The sovereign Lord has a *secret counsel* in heaven, where this righteousness is considered as wrought out for his chosen people; and allotted for them only, as such. But he likewise has an *open court* on earth, where the judgment is set in the sinner's conscience, by an efficacy of his word; law and justice being seated on the tribunal. And it is a fundamental statute of his kingdom,—that in this court the Surety-righteousness be proceeded upon, according to the *intrinsic merits* of the cause; in behalf of every law-condemned sinner who is taking up his plea and rest thereupon by faith, as the same is freely exhibited to him in the gospel: And all this without any regard to that peculiar consideration which is had of persons, in the secret council above. Thus, though *elect* and *believers* will prove to be all one in the event, yet the matter is ordered by such a mystery of divine wisdom and sovereignty, as to leave no bar in the way of believing,—with respect to any, wherever the gospel comes.

And so the case is represented, in Acts 10:43: “To him give all the prophets witness; that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” According to the tenor and method of dispensation, at the bar of law and justice, it is not whosoever was elected,—or whosoever was designed and intended to be an object of Christ's death, in the former transaction of the New Covenant; but it is *whosoever believeth in him*, upon the present administration of that Covenant by the gospel, that *shall receive remission of sins*, the door being equally open to all, in the way of believing.—Again, though it is only *all that the Father giveth* him who in the event shall come to him, yet our Lord says, John 6:37, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”: The door stands open to every comer, whose warrant

and entertainment depends upon the opening of this door to him in the gospel; and not upon there having been any particular view of him in the former appointment or offering up of the great sacrifice for sin.

The sum of the matter is this: That the Lord is pleased to gather his elect from among others, by such a dispensation of the gospel as takes no more notice of them than others. All the peculiar respect which the purchased redemption has to them, all the particular respect which Christ had to them in his death,—is altogether abstracted from, in the dispensation of the gospel. The glorious Redeemer, with his plenteous redemption, is equally set forth to all by the gospel, for being received and rested upon, according to the present revelation and exhibition to every one,—not according to what views were had of particular persons, in the original providing of such a Redeemer and redemption. And this unlimited method of dispensation, is what the Lord blesseth for gathering in his elect: while they are gathered in upon no other ground, by no other invitation or welcome, than what is common to them with all other hearers of the gospel, who therefore must be left inexcusable, under an heinous aggravation of their guilt and punishment.

It is justly declared, in the seventh article of the Synod's act about doctrine, That "the formal *ground and reason of faith*—doth *no wise* lie in any particular objective destination of Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, or in any particular objective intention wherewith he made and fulfilled the same: But it *wholly* lies in the glorious Person and Offices of Christ, with his satisfaction and righteousness,—as freely and *equally* set forth by the Gospel, unto all the hearers thereof;—with the Lord's gracious call and command, for *each* of them to come over by faith unto this glorious foundation; and with absolute promises of justification and eternal life through Christ to mankind-sinners as such in the Gospel, the possession of which blessings is to be certainly obtained in this way of believing." What is here said about the ground upon which faith proceeds, and the reason of its procedure in closing with Christ, has been explained already,—as it respects the Gospel call, while faith yields obedience to that call, in coming over to the same ground upon which the call proceeds,—and unto which it freely invites.

There is a full warrant to believe, or a general right of access to Christ by faith, which all the hearers of the Gospel have before they believe,—and whether they ever believe or not; and, in this respect, the

provision of the New Covenant is *their own mercy*: Which warrant or right, faith believes and improves. Yet faith is not a mere believing of an interest which the person had before; and it is no way a believing of any supposed interest in Christ's blood,—from its having been shed for the person, as for every person. But a *particular* saving interest in Christ and his blood, is acquired by faith; such as the person had not before, or which did not hold true of him before he believed.

Neither is it a mere possession upon a former right, that faith thus obtains. For as the general right of access to Christ, which all the hearers of the gospel have,—is only a right for coming to deal in the market of free grace; none can have any personal right in what is there set forth, any personal title thereto, till he buy the same in that market: Where the sinner's side of the bargain, *without money and without price*,—is just a giving up with all self-righteousness, and all creature-portions for his soul; in taking hold of God's covenant by faith. And thus he is brought into the bond of the covenant, or personally instated therein; so as to be vested with a covenant right and title, which he had not before: He takes out a personal *right of interest* by faith, upon the ground of that general *right of access* which he formerly enjoyed. Wherefore, Faith takes possession of Christ and his blood, with his whole righteousness and salvation,—just by taking out a new interest, a new claim of right and property therein; as it apprehends and applies the glorious charter of the New Covenant.

The declarations and promises of the Gospel are made to men with relative words, or terms suited for appropriation, such as, *you, your, thou, thee, thy*: And when these enter into the ear of faith, they immediately point out or specify the person; as all holding true of him in particular.—The Gospel is primarily dispensed to the congregation of the dead, men who are spiritually *dead in trespasses and sins*, as it is the glorious channel of divine influence for quickening them. And while a sinner continues thus dead, he can have no real apprehension of Gospel declarations and promises as belonging to him: Yea, it then continues to be one of God's secrets, whether he shall prove to have any particular lot in that matter. But whenever the person is spiritually quickened, and thus brought to the hearing of faith, immediately the word of grace strikes the ear of faith, as spoken to him: And he credits it with terms of approbation.—*Me, my, mine*.

But the *warrant*, the formal ground and reason of the person's faith or persuasion, as to all this matter,—doth no way consist in what *experience* he has of the Lord's special and saving way of dealing with him. As when a friend is offering any thing by way of a free gift to a person,—it never comes to be personally his own, till he actually receives it: And then he claims it as his own, not on the footing of *his act* in receiving it, but of his friend's *offer* by which he was warranted to receive it and keep it. Just so, as to faith's claim of right in Christ, (with his satisfaction, righteousness and whole salvation),—it is no way founded upon a person's experience of the Lord's enabling him to receive by the appropriation of faith, nor yet upon his own act in receiving: But it is altogether founded upon the Lord's free *offer* and *call* in the Gospel, as what still continues to be the ground of claim.

That truth about Christ and his blood, which justifying faith immediately terminates upon, is a matter of *present truth*, and considered only as such.—In the case of justification, or at the bar of law and justice, faith has no backlook on divine purposes and intentions; it takes no consideration of what may have been formerly true about the person, in any counsels of the Father and the Son concerning him; it makes no inquiry, whether any particular eye was had to the person, in the former appointment and offering up of Christ's sacrifice: But it looks straight out to Christ as revealed in the word, to his blood and righteousness as there set forth; and on the ground of the free exhibition, it applies all to the person's self;—or it takes up a saving interest in Christ, a claim of property in his blood and righteousness, by the *appropriation* which has been explained. And this interest, this claim of property, is not a *former truth*, which faith took rise from as the ground and reason thereof, but it is a *present truth*, which faith terminates upon as the material object thereof,—in the supernatural mystery of its appropriating act. Thus faith apprehends the blood of Christ as a full payment of the person's debt, a full satisfaction for his guilt in particular; it *believes* that his blood is so, it pleads and rests upon the same as such. But in what sense is it, that faith takes the blood of Christ to be such a payment and satisfaction for the person? Not in the sense of its having been *formerly designed* to be so, but of its being *presently sustained* to be so, at the bar of law and justice,—according to the sovereign method of grace. Whom it was particularly that Christ offered up the atonement for, and for whom the Lord received it off his hand, is a matter no way considered in the present case: But God and Christ are

presently offering this atonement in the word of grace, to be received by faith; upon which ground faith receives it, appropriates it, and rests upon it,—as an atonement for all the person's guilt, unto eternal salvation.

As faith is thus exercised upon Christ, it enters by him into the house of mercy; and here a most glorious prospect lies open to its view: So that it looks backward, upon the purposes of divine love and grace toward the person from all eternity; and it looks forward, with a lively hope, upon the person's salvation to all eternity.—No man is called or allowed, at first instance, to look back on any counsels of the Father and the Son concerning him; by believing that Christ intentionally died for him in particular. But the person must first turn his eyes straight forward to the open door of the house of mercy, so as to enter thereby; and he thus comes within view of all the glorious things in that house, from the one end of it to the other. Jesus Christ is *evidently set forth* to sinners, *before their eyes, crucified among them*; a present revelation and offer is made of him as crucified, or dead,—for them to rest upon, in the way of receiving him by faith: And faith receives him with appropriation,—saying, *Christ is mine, his satisfaction and righteousness are mine*: It speaks not immediately of what *was*, or *will be*; but it says, he *is* mine, these *are* mine,—upon the ground of that present offer which faith accepts. Moreover, the believing of this present interest in Christ, is directly a faith of *eternal life and salvation by him*; as lying secured in the merit of his death: And it is directly a believing,—that *whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for the person*; as faith deals not immediately with the former intending, but with the *present sustaining* of all this for the person.

Such is the direct exercise of faith, in the case of justification: And when it thus appropriates its object, it has a glorious privilege, under the Holy Spirit's influence,—of going farther and farther out upon its object in the word; so that it looks backward and forward through the wide field of grace, in ascending the hill of God. It rises up to a view of election, in the Lord's everlasting love; to a view of Christ's amazing love, in laying down his life for the person; and to a view of the soul's portion in the land afar off, which makes to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.—But still it is a *present interest* in Christ by a present receiving of him, that sinners have immediately ado with. And as it is the duty of all who hear the Gospel, to take out or verify this saving interest to themselves,—by the appropriation of faith; so these other blessed interests (here spoken of) will always be found inseparably connected therewith, in the chain of free grace.