



The glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father manifested in the raising of Lazarus from the dead : a sermon

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THE GLORY

OF THE

Only-Begotten of the Father

MANIFESTED IN THE RAISING OF LAZARUS FROM
THE DEAD.

A SERMON

BY THE

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PSALM CXLVI, v. 5—8.

Blest is he, who for his aid
Hath the God of Jacob taken ;
He shall never be afraid,
He can never be forsaken :
Since he trusts the Lord always,
God shall be his strength and stay.

He who made heav'n, earth, and sea,
And the fulness of creation
Through His mighty " Let there be "
Out of nothingness did fashion :
God, the world's Almighty Lord,
Ever keeps His faithful word.

He the poor man's cause doth plead,
Stays the raging tyrant's madness,
To the hungry giveth bread,
Fills their hearts with joy and gladness,
And from sore captivity
Sets the humble bondman free.

Sight He giveth to the blind,
He the erring doth enlighten,
He the dark and troubled mind
With His mercy's ray doth brighten ;
Aye the Lord of Righteousness,
Righteous men doth love and bless.

What is a man to do, when his best resolutions are again and again borne down by the overwhelming power of some secret besetting sin, or rather, when, after a short struggle, he almost voluntarily abandons himself to it, and falling into a life of sin, raises the standard of rebellion against God, and ceases to care either for Heaven or Hell? He yearns to shake off his sin, and yet he loves it. He hates and abhors it, and yet he cherishes it. He lies prostrate, beaten down, crushed beneath the oppressive weight of his wicked desire; and though he heaves many a sigh to heaven, he is unable to break free from the prison house, and feels heavily chained down to his lustful appetite. To such a one God seems to be God no longer. He is unable to pray. He has

nothing to lay before his God, not even an upright or a broken heart. His tears never cease to flow ; he despairingly wrings his hands ; but neither his tears nor his despair can avail him anything. Divine grace seems to be powerless, or hopelessly beyond his reach. The blood that cleanses from all sin seems not to have been shed for him, and he can no longer believe in a quickening Spirit. What is such a one to do ? I think he should take a calm and quiet view of his case, and consider that he is allowing himself to be tricked and beguiled by the powers of darkness. He should not be over much alarmed at the outward symptoms of his disease, but should go to the root of the matter, and search for the cause of all those things that trouble him, and sometimes almost drive him to despair. Common-sense tells him that when sores and ulcers break out upon his hands and feet, and other parts of his body, there must be something radically wrong with his vital juices, and that he needs some remedy that will cleanse and purify his very life-blood. The same he will find holds good in regard to his soul. After a careful examination of the diseased symptoms of his soul, he will discover that all such outward manifestations have their source and origin in his inmost self, and that, therefore, his inmost self must undergo a renewal and a change, before the outward symptoms can disappear.

Now this inmost self has one thing in common with the dark powers of death : it never wearies of asserting and insisting upon, its own strength and its own importance. For this reason it both secretly, and publicly puts forth the doctrine, that the blood of Christ, though it cleanses from sins, does not cleanse from *all* sins ; that there are some sins of which one has to purge *oneself* first, before one can obtain cleansing and justification through the blood of Christ. The inmost self makes for itself a Christ out of its own conversion and sanctification ; and, therefore, it cannot find any Christ when it has accomplished this conversion and sanctification. The inmost self proudly rejects the thought of a life in the midst of death, of grace in the midst of corruption, of salvation in the midst of condemnation ; but it asks back the wantonly forfeited birthright of Esau, and the blessing of Esau. And it is for this reason that our inmost self is so full of perplexity and despair, and sheds so many tears, and makes so many painful efforts, as it would fain persuade itself, to free itself from its evil passions, but in reality to truckle to a more baneful passion than all. When the sweet gospel voice invites such a man to be converted, and to wash

away his sins, he cannot get over this *one* besetting sin, because he thinks that but for *this one failing* he is all that God can possibly require. For the Gospel proclaims the righteousness of God : God alone is righteous, and imparts his righteousness to all who are in Christ by faith. Where the Gospel is preached, it soon becomes plain to the human soul, that it is affected with a great many other abominable sins, and a great many other perversenesses, besides those which cause us so much trouble. And this revelation is made in order to encourage a man, in spite of all this perverseness and of his special besetting sin, in the midst of all his corruption, not to relax his hold on Christ, but to believe in Him, and in that righteousness, holiness, and salvation, which we can have through Him in God.

And so we have received the precious Gospel in order that it might unveil to us the love of Christ, that love which passes all understanding. Almost on every page of the Holy Book these words are plainly written : " Here, thou son of man, is a mirror for thee, in which thou mayest behold thyself, and thy whole conduct towards God, and also the great power of the love of God, and the grace of Jesus Christ towards thyself." Know then the things through which thou mayest unwaveringly hope to be justified, sanctified, and saved, and healed not only of thy special besetting sin, but of those other sins of thine which are perhaps even worse than that special besetting sin. And that these things are proclaimed and promised in the Gospel, let me prove to you by reading a portion of the very words of that blessed message :

St. JOHN, XI.

1 Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

7 Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judæa again.

8 *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee ; and goest Thou thither again ?

9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

11 These things said he : and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death : but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe ; nevertheless let us go unto him.

16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.

19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him : but Mary sat *still* in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live :

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this ?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord : I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee,

29 As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.

34 And said, Where have ye laid him ? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him !

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died ?

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord by this time he stinketh : for he hath been *dead* four days.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God ?

41 Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Let us then, consider, with reference to ourselves :

- (1) THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCIPLES.
- (2) THE CONDUCT OF MARTHA AND MARY.
- (3) THE CONDUCT OF THE JEWS.
- (4) THE CONDUCT OF OUR LORD.

(i.) Would that we could continually keep that one little word "Gospel," and the fulness of its meaning, before our eyes and in our hearts. For does it not mean "joyful tidings": a joyful message delivered on behalf of God, proclaiming to us glad tidings of great joy? And the joyful message runs thus: "Thou art a sinful man, but God has thoughts of peace concerning thee. Thou wert lost, but here there is a Saviour for thee, who has taken thee out of, and lifted thee far above, thy helpless state." In the portion which has just been read, we once more look down into the deepest depths of human helplessness, and once more behold the matchless glory of the grace of Christ. The day was come that was to witness the fulfilment of the words spoken by the Lord in Paradise: "It shall bruise Thy head, and Thou shalt bruise his heel." Our Lord was now to throw down the gauntlet to him who had the power of death, that is the devil, was utterly to rout and destroy the devil, and to set those free who were held in bondage all through their lives by the fear of death. But before entering on the main struggle, He was once more, as He had done on two former occasions, on a special issue to measure His strength against him who had the power of death.

There was a certain man lying on a bed of sickness in the village of Bethany, and his name was Lazarus. It was told unto the Lord that His friend was sick. Lazarus was well-known to the disciples, and one would have expected them to urge the Lord immediately to set out for Bethany in order that He might there give a proof of His power, and manifest His glory. But though the Lord had again and again shewn forth to them His glory in all the signs and wonders which he had done before their eyes, they nevertheless did not understand, not even when Jesus said to

them : " This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." They do not know that the glory of God is most truly set forth when the power of His grace is perceived to be manifested in His having sent His Son, in order that in His Son we might receive life out of death, and salvation out of destruction. The disciples make it appear that in themselves they have no love either for God or for their neighbour ; for they manifest neither zeal for the glory of God, nor love for their sick friend Lazarus, and they do not seem to have even the faintest perception of what was written concerning their own lost state, the spiritual interpretation of the law, and the necessity that Christ should die for the sins of the people. They had turned a deaf ear to all He had said to them, on several occasions, about His approaching sufferings for sin. Those very men who had confessed that He had words of eternal life, clearly shewed that they understood as little of God's plan of salvation as new-born babes.

" Let us go into Judea again ;" this proposal of our Lord called forth an answer from the disciples which showed that their attachment to the Lord was purely carnal, and that they did not care what became of the work of salvation, so long as they could keep Him with them, and enjoy His presence. How much wiser they thought themselves than the Lord ! They ought to have known that nothing could happen but what was ordained of God. But, instead of this, they look upon the Lord as one who is labouring under a delusion, as one who has considerably less practical wisdom than themselves, and is bent on undertaking something which He cannot accomplish. They never enquire whether eternal salvation can be won for them by any other way than that of suffering and death ; nor do they concern themselves about their sick friend Lazarus, or care whether he dies or not, or bestow even a passing thought on the trouble and anxiety of his sisters. Their hearts are full of one object only, how they are to dissuade the Lord from His purpose of going to Judæa. With a view to this they say to Him : " Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee ; and goest Thou thither again ?" and pretend to understand His words, " Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" of bodily sleep, and answer accordingly that " If he sleep he shall do well." And again, when the Lord told them plainly that Lazarus was dead, and announced His intention of going to him, Thomas at length broke forth into the words : " Let us also go that we may die with

Him"—as who should say : What is the death of Lazarus to us ? Nevertheless, if our Master absolutely refuses to listen to reason, if He insists on rushing into the open jaws of death, well then, we will at least do our best to deliver Him, and if we perish in the attempt, death is the worst thing that can happen to us. The truth that ' from death proceeds life ' had not yet dawned upon their minds.

My friends, why, do you think, has it pleased the Holy Spirit to have these things noted down for us ? Was it that we might extract from them all manner of spiritual triflings ? It is well possible for a frivolous and trifling mind to explain and interpret this chapter from beginning to end, and yet not to gain any knowledge of itself from the Gospel record. But if in perusing the Gospels we constantly keep our attention fixed on the behaviour of the Lord as well as on that of those men who come into contact with Him, we shall be in a condition to fathom the deep meaning of the Apostle's words : " I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith ; as it is written, the just shall live by faith." What though we be possessed with this or that besetting sin, are we for that reason to quit our hold upon the precious truth that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law ? Should this or that special sin not rather serve to open our eyes to our general condition ? When we hear of the behaviour of the Lord's disciples and of all flesh towards Him in the days of His flesh, let us not on any account neglect to look into our own hearts, and to take heed to ourselves : then we shall become aware how great is the number of the sins of which we have been guilty against the Lord. We shall discover that whenever the Lord has taken us into His school, and set us lessons by which we might learn faith and truly become partakers of the righteousness of faith, we have shown ourselves as intractable and as heavy of perception as the disciples of old. For it is one thing to have fixed the entire catechism in one's memory, and to yield a mere intellectual assent to it, and to all the principal truths of Christianity—and quite another thing to have a vital knowledge of those truths, and to put them into practice. Now, I leave it for each one of you to decide whether on the whole this " glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified " and the love of his poor, suffering neighbour, are matters of the deepest interest to him, or whether he is not rather more anxious

to obtain the good thing from the Lord for himself, without even properly knowing in what the good gifts of the Lord really consist. Let each one of you judge for himself, whether or not the love of self, is stronger in him than any other feeling, and whether he is really so fully aware of the whole extent of the depravity of his nature as to have become willing "that his old man should be crucified with Christ." (*Rom. vi. 6.*) Have we a real insight into the meaning of Christ's suffering and death for our sins? Do we know the power of His resurrection? Do we realize the truth that He is ever ready to evolve life out of death? Alas! that we are so blind and so full of self-love, to regard ourselves as better even than the disciples of the Lord. Alas! for our self-righteousness which closes our ears to the lessons of God's precious Gospel. Truly, we make much ado about our sins, and yet refuse to see that in our inmost souls we are harbouring sins quite as abominable as those which strike the eye. For this reason we should be all the more willing to listen to the teaching of the Gospel, which shows us that after all we understand nothing of the grace of God, of the love of Christ, of the tenderness with which His heart yearns after that which was lost, or of His wisdom in letting things come to such a pass that nothing remains but death, in order that the power of His life may become manifest. Then, and not till then, shall we rightly know the depth of our sinfulness, and the proportionate power of His grace.

(ii.) The Gospel narrative bears out by many a characteristic touch Jeremiah's description of the heart of man as "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is illustrated more especially on the present occasion by the behaviour of Martha and Mary. They sent unto Him, saying: "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick." What a message was that to send to the Lord—as if He were a respecter of persons. How it must have grieved Jesus to receive this message. Was He only to go to those whom He loved? Was He who had come to be a physician to all that were sick, to throw aside all His other work only that He might visit Lazarus in his illness? Jesus did not love as the world loves. This is evident from the fifth verse, where we should probably have said: "Now Jesus loved *Mary*, and her sister, and Lazarus," because *Mary* was spiritually the most advanced of the three. But that is by no means the order in which the names stand in the text, There we read: "Now Jesus loved *Martha*, and her sister, and Lazarus." Here *Mary* is not even mentioned

by name. Does not the inspired writer, by the unexpected order in which the names appear, seem to put the following words into the mouth of Christ: "How, do you speak to me thus, Martha, and Mary, because you think I love Lazarus more than all others? nay, I love thee, *Martha*, more than all the rest, (because thou hast more need of My love) than Mary, and then Lazarus." How much better it would have sounded, if they had sent word to Jesus, saying: "Lord, behold our brother is sick."

And again, when our Lord had come to the place where Lazarus lay dead, Mary remained behind, and "sat still in the house." And what was Martha's motive in going to meet Jesus? Was it because she wanted to give Him a proof that she believed that He was "the resurrection and the life"? Ah! no, she appears even to intend a reproach to Him for having come too late: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." What very foolish words these are! As if the death of Lazarus could have happened without the will of God. And then, again, "I know that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." According to Martha, God is a merciless God, and has commanded death to slay her brother. If Jesus had been there, God would not have suffered Lazarus to die. Jesus, on the other hand, is to her a holy man, according to fleshly notions of holiness. Still it is necessary that He should first pray to God. God would refuse to grant what she asked to Martha, but God could not deny anything to a man of such sanctity as that which in her opinion belonged to Jesus. She imagined that she knew Jesus, and yet it is easy to perceive that she knows nothing whatever of the power of faith, and that she does not in the least understand how it is God's will that He should be glorified in the Son, and we should, therefore, glorify the Father in the Son; for she does not think that Jesus can do anything without prayer. Again, Christ's assurance that her brother shall rise again, elicits an answer from her, which clearly shows that she does not attach any weight to the many proofs Jesus has given her, that He has received from the Father a commandment, which, in virtue of His being one with the Father, gives Him absolute authority over life and death. She says: "I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day." It is true she is for a moment carried away by the mighty words of the Lord, and is roused to the confession: "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." But this belief that the

glory of God would shine forth brightly from the Lord Jesus, utterly gives way as soon as it is put to the proof. For when Jesus told them to take away the stone, she says: "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Or in other words: Is it still time for the glory of God to manifest itself forth? Ah! no, for my brother has already fallen a prey to putrefaction. It is too late for that now. It is all over by this time. Let us quietly leave the stone where it is. One must draw the limit somewhere. To restore to life a dead body from which the vital warmth has only just departed, such a thing might perhaps be possible; but where the matter has been suffered to proceed as far as this, it would be madness to cherish any further hope. We see that she denied the power of the Lord three distinct times; first with the words: "If Thou hadst been here it would not have happened, but now it is too late"; then by saying: "Oh yes, he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day": and again, at the tomb, by exclaiming in the hearing of all the by-standers: "Why should we put ourselves to the trouble of rolling away the stone? Why should'st Thou endure the pang of beholding Thy friend in his present state, seeing that his fair flesh is already marred by corruption?" Thus Martha had a kind of faith in the Lord, and yet did not believe in Him. She had some knowledge of what He was, and yet in no way acknowledged Him as she ought to have acknowledged Him; she expected everything from Him, and yet, when her hope was put to the test, she spoke of Him as if she thought Him a human being like herself, and nothing more.

Nor was Mary's conduct a whit better than that of her sister. She, who erewhile had listened so quietly and meekly to the teaching of her Lord, now reproaches Him with His delay, and ascribes to it the death of her brother. She did not in the least apprehend that his death-bed had been surrounded with the presence of God; and still less did she understand that from this very death life should spring forth to the glory of God, and that by this very death the Son of God should be glorified.

Should not these touches of character by which the sacred narrative brings home to us the inner life of those two holy women, Mary and Martha, serve to teach us, how full of wickedness we are even down in the very depths of our hearts? We are too much and too exclusively concerned with those transgressions of the law, and those evil passions which are most striking to the

outward eye, and are condemned even by heathen rules of morality; about these we make a great stir, as if nothing else was amiss with us, and when we have set our minds at rest about these grosser sins, then we are fully satisfied, and congratulate ourselves on our moral achievements. When we have managed to lull this or that evil passion to sleep, we at once lay claim to the uppermost seat in heaven, and imagine that we have built our house upon a rock—but our abominable sins against the grace and long-suffering of God, and the love of Christ, our folly and self-conceit, our unbelief, and the blindness of our hearts, cause us but little concern or uneasiness. Yet God points out to us on almost every page of His precious and faithful Word, how little the human reason by itself can either know or believe of that great fundamental truth of the Christian faith: that God, who made both heaven and earth by His word and with the breath of His mouth, still calls things which be not as though they were; that it is still His way, the way of His salvation and redemption, to raise up from that which is dead, things "which are as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable" (*Heb. xi., 12.*)

We are daily surrounded in all manner of ways by every variety of death, and we are daily swallowed up, as it were, by death in many a hideous shape. But every kind of death loses its terror, when we think of the comforting words of our most faithful Lord: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Do we realize this? Alas, like Martha, we are much taken up with the thought of the manifold death which holds us ensnared, as it were, in inextricable toils: but as to the glorious "nevertheless" of the precious Gospel which tells us that our condition appears so utterly hopeless and lost for the very purpose that the glory of God's grace, love, power and unspeakable mercy may be revealed and manifested unto us, and that we may behold the Christ of God in all His glory—of all this we believe as little as Moses believed that if he struck the flinty rock water would gush forth—as little as Martha and Mary believed when their brother had lain in the grave four days. When all manner of darkness and death encompasses us round about, do we really believe in our heart of hearts that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world? When we are assailed by trials, do we really believe with a faith that cannot be shaken what is said in the 8th chapter

of the Epistle to the Romans : " If God be for us who shall be against us ? " " How shall He not with His Son also freely give us all things ? " " He shall win praise, and raise us to honour. " " Nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. " Alas, how often do our lips give utterance to the thought, that if the Lord had been present with us, this or that mischance would not have befallen, but that now He has forsaken us, and abandoned us to our fate. How often do we measure His love by our standard of holiness, and regard that as a great wickedness which is the only holiness possible to us—to cast ourselves upon God, just as we are, with all our sins, wretchedness, and deadness of soul. Day after day we remain drearily at home and pine away in mournful wretchedness, instead of raising our eyes to God and meeting His gaze of unspeakable pity and love. What hard thoughts do we sometimes cherish against God, as if He no longer cared for us, as if His hand rested too heavily upon us, as if His anger towards us could never relent. And what strange thoughts do we sometimes entertain concerning Jesus, as if His feeling towards those who are pining in sadness and corruption, and who lie low in the dust and in the power of death, was different from that of God Himself. How often is a perverse construction put upon the words " for Christ's sake, " as though Jesus was a Roman saint, and God made certain concessions to Him in our favour, but on the whole had set His heart upon shutting us up in the furnace of affliction, and never letting us go, in spite of all our prayers and supplications. How much rather do we look upon the matter from what we consider as a common-sense point of view, and comfort ourselves with the thought that all will come right " in the resurrection at the last day, " instead of turning to God for immediate aid and deliverance. And how often do we complain that God does not answer prayer, when it is our own want of faith that prevents Him, and we cannot make bold to believe, because we think we have not sufficiently prepared ourselves for it. Indeed, just where God looks for faith, at the very moment, that is, when we are inclined to say : " Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days, "—how completely do we then renounce it and say : This is really too much for human nature—now, at last, it is all over : what should I hope for after this ?

(iii.) It would be well if this were the worst ; but there are still lower depths of unreason and of wickedness in the human heart. The Gospel reveals to our view these lowest depths of human nature, in its account of the conduct of the Jews who wit-

nessed this proof which the Lord gave of His power by calling up life out of death. We are told that "Jesus wept." And why did Jesus weep? Because, wherever He turned, He met with nothing but unreason, unbelief, and blindness and hardness of heart. Alas, He shed bitter tears, because He did not find a single heart that had any regard for the glory of God. They were all blind to everything except what they saw with their eyes. To find men firmly persuaded that they had eternal life, without, however, having the slightest understanding of the nature of that life—how deeply it must have grieved Him, who had for three long years never wearied of giving them proof after proof, that He alone was the life, and had overcome every kind of death. Jesus wept because He could not find a single heart to understand this. But what did the Jews think was the cause of Christ's emotion? They said, "Behold, how He loved him," as if Jesus was mourning for the death of Lazarus, and not rather on their account, and on that of Martha and Mary, because they were all so deeply sunk in fearful unbelief, and heeded only visible things, but entirely disregarded the gift of God, and Him who was walking in their midst. There were even some among them who showed how truly the Lord had spoken when He said: "Out of the heart of man proceedeth blasphemy." Some of them said: "Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" They had no opinion of the Lord, if he did not fall in with their preconceived notions. They seem to imply that too much noise has been made about His opening the eyes of the man that had been born blind; else why did He now stand at the grave, and weep for the loss of His friend? What strange behaviour that was! If He really had any power, why had He not prevented the death of His friend? Did not that look like a betrayal of weakness? At any rate, it did not appear calculated to revive the drooping faith of His followers. Some of you will think: What have we to do with those Jews? They were wicked people and always ready to put a false construction on the actions of our Lord. But I say, that it is wrong to speak thus lightly of them. Those Jews were God-fearing Jews, and knew of God, of His grace, and of the Messiah. Jews who came to visit Martha and Mary, who knew of Christ's relation to the family, and who showed their kindness of heart by coming to comfort the sisters—those Jews must have had grounds of consolation that were taken from Scripture. Nevertheless

their judgment of Christ is altogether perverse and wrong. And many Christians fall into the same error, and think that Christ really wept for His friend. But let us look into our hearts and carefully examine ourselves, and see whether, as we listen to the truths which Jesus has taught, we think of ourselves and remember that those truths were meant for us, that they refer to our state, and that it is our hardness of heart that fills with tears the eyes of Him who is Truth itself. Alas, how constantly we mistake the meaning of Christ's sorrow and love of truth, and think of our neighbour, of our fellowman, as if *his* heart only was hard and blind, as if *he* only was full of unbelief and folly, and as if *we* had never done anything to make a Saviour weep.

And even this would not be so bad, if there did not proceed out of our hearts all manner of blasphemy, blasphemy against the Lord and against His truth, love, mercy, and faithfulness. The bare question why he does not do as much for us now, as He did on a former occasion, or why He does not give us something which we ardently desire, or the doubt implied in the thought that He is no longer as ready to help us as he was before—are really blasphemous imputations against the majesty of His love which is strongest in our weakness, and mightiest in our helplessness.

For these reasons we should be willing to learn the lesson which the Gospel has to teach us, that, whether we be like the disciples, or Martha, or Mary, or the Jews, we in every respect come short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace, and not for any merit of our own. We should learn, whenever we are rendered uneasy by the violence of this or that ruling passion, to use the light of the Gospel in tracing that evil passion to its real inmost source. Now the source from which all our corruption flows—though we may never suspect it—is our unwillingness to recognise the glory of God as the end of our lives, and our reluctance to glorify His Son by dying unto ourselves, which self-annihilation “is not unto death, but that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.”

(*iv.*) It remains that we should briefly consider how the Son *was* glorified by the sickness and death of Lazarus, and how we are taught by this incident in the Gospel narrative that whatever seems to encompass and threaten our lives, is not really unto death, but for our good, that we may *believe*.

Jesus, our gracious Saviour, quietly forgives the insult to His *all-embracing* love, which is conveyed in the words: “Lord, be-

hold, *he whom thou lovest*, is sick." As He had said of the man that was born blind (*John ix, 3*): "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in Him,"—so He now once more gives expression to the same thought: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." He has maintained and proved this fundamental truth of the Gospel, that where there is suffering, there shall also be the mercy, love and grace of God, who out of unspeakable pity sent His Son to save that which was lost—throughout the whole of His dealings in the passage which lies before us, just as He still proves it throughout the whole life history of each one of His elect. In the present instance, the event seems at first to give the lie to this truth; for the sickness proves really unto death—Lazarus actually does die. His truth and the power of His love conquer by the very means of what at first seemed the victory of death and destruction. Our Lord did not heed what short-sighted men might say. That which proceeded from His gracious lips proved to be true in the end. How terribly did not men provoke Him, by their carnal thoughts, the hardness of their hearts, their self-conceit, their folly, their cold indifference to the glory of God, and their spurious love and apparent devotion to His person, to withdraw from the work which the Father had sent Him to do. But Jesus rather bears with His disciples in unspeakable patience and love, and instead of rebuking them for presumptuously judging of things belonging to God, He merely teaches them, as a Father might teach his children, that one must always obey the call of God without anxiously enquiring whether there be a lion in the way, because one can never be certain of success, except by unconditional surrender and obedience to the will of God, since everything depends on the will of God, and we, of our own selves, can do nothing. Jesus is not angry with His disciples for not perceiving how the Son of God is to be glorified. He patiently waits till His hour comes; and then, when He is about to show that after all the sickness of Lazarus had not been unto death, He thus pours forth the love of His heart to His foolish disciples: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." From these words we see what was that glory of God which should be manifested in the Son: it was to consist in a proof given to the disciples, that He calls up life out of death, so that in the midst of their deadness they might believe in the power of Jesus to do this,

and thus have perfect enjoyment of this His glory.—Quite as little is the Lord influenced by Martha's unbelief and perverse notions concerning His own person. Since she does not understand His promise that her brother shall rise again, He opens the whole of heaven to her view in the words: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die." And then He applies this truth to her personally by the question: "Believest thou this?"—and thus shows her what she ought to believe of Him.

Alas, had He not also good reason to be angry with Mary, who in her sadness was unable to rise beyond visible things, who saw no more in the Lord than appeared to the outward eye, and with the Jews who, like her, saw nothing but what was outwardly visible, and who therefore wept for Lazarus, and not only could not understand the Lord's loving purpose, but even blasphemed His holy name; had He not good reason to abandon them to their foolish devices, and to depart from them, or with a word to give them over to destruction? So terribly did they provoke Him with their perverseness of heart that He once and again groaned in the spirit, and was so troubled at their unbelief that His eyes were filled with tears. But in the midst of His righteous indignation He still remains the same gracious, loving Saviour that He has always been. To the very last human unbelief places all manner of obstructions in His path; and to the very last He preaches faith, and inspires them with faith. He Himself remains unshaken and unmoved and never wavers in His love. He gives thanks to God for having granted His prayer,—but not for His own sake. He asks nothing for Himself but the souls of those who press round Him and who are sunk in death, in unbelief, and in blindness of heart. And that they may at least have done some little thing, He lets them roll away the stone from the grave, and that, in the midst of their deadness of soul, they may believe, He cries with a loud voice so that all can hear, His battle-cry against the power of the devil, to the decaying body of Lazarus, as if he still had ears to hear, and a heart to understand: "Lazarus, come forth." Then should we, who receive a full account of these things in the blessed Gospel, still doubt the power of the grace of Jesus Christ, or of the love of God, because this or that description of death, this or that wretchedness, this or that evil passion, hold us in their toils? Should we let them keep our

trembling hearts from flying for refuge to faith, or think that God has forsaken us? Should we "sit still in the house" covering our faces with our hands, and mourning in sackcloth and ashes? Should we still try to do anything for ourselves by our own strength, or to mend what we have done amiss, or should we not rather accept in their fullest sense the words of the Lord: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Hateful and abominable every transgression of the ten good words of the Law of our God certainly must remain. Grim and terrible this or that trial, this or that sorrow, this or that death certainly will appear—and we shall be fiercely assailed and set upon by many a kind of death. But if we are anxiously longing for deliverance, for help, for salvation, for *life*—then we should be troubled not so much because of our many and heavy transgressions, as because of our *unbelief*, and we should utterly renounce and abandon all hope of ever helping ourselves. On the other hand, let us firmly believe in Him, who, though he sometimes delays in coming, so that in spite of His promise it seems oftentimes as if the devil were going to keep his prey for ever—yet even when we have lain in the grave four days, can be hindered by no power on earth or in hell, from calling to His dead: "Lazarus, come forth"—so that we can behold the power and the fulfilment of His word: "And he that was dead came forth." And then the Lord looses us, and gives us all manner of freedom to go in and out (v. 44.) *Amen.*

Ps. xxvii 13—14.

I do believe that in the land of life
 I shall behold the goodness of the Lord.
 He never trusts in vain, who trusts His word,
 Else had I fainted in this mortal strife.
 Wait on the Lord, my soul: He will impart
 Strength to thy life, and courage to thine heart,
 Look up, for thy salvation draweth nigh,
 Be of good cheer, and on the Lord rely.