

DENOUNCING THE PLAN THAT GOD HAS REJECTED

We Sinners Must Throw Ourselves at the Mercy of God!

Denouncing the plan that God has rejected and never would be acceptable

Man can never come before God, save through Jesus Christ! Let me say boldly, to hope to be saved by works is a delusion; to hope to be saved by a method in which grace and works are co-acting, is not merely a delusion, but an absurd delusion, since it is contrary to the very nature of things, that grace and merit should ever mingle and co-work. Paul the apostle has declared times without number, that if it be of grace it is not of works, otherwise, grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work. It must be either one or the other. These two cannot be married, for God forbids the banning of the two. He will have it all grace or all works, all of Christ or all of man; but for Christ to be a make-weight, for Christ to ' supplement your narrow robes by patching on a piece of his own, for Christ to tread a part of the winepress, and for you to tread the rest; oh! This can never be. God will never be yoked with the creature. You might link an angel with a worm and bid them fly together, but God with the creature, the precious blood of Jesus with the foul ditch-water of our human merits, never, never. Our paste gems, our varnished falsehoods, our righteousness which is but filthy rags, put with the real, true, precious, everlasting, divine things of Christ! Never! Unless heaven should blend in alliance with hell and holiness hold alliance with impurity! It must be one or the other, either man's merit absolutely and alone, or unmixed, unmerited favor from the Lord. Now, I suppose if I were to labor never so arduously to hunt out this evil spirit from the sons of men, I should miss it still, for it hides in so many shapes, and therefore let me say, that in no shape, in no sense, in no single case, and in no degree whatsoever, are we saved by our works or by the law. I say in no sense because men make such shifts to save alive their own righteousness. I will show you one man who says, "Well, I don't expect to be saved by my honesty; I don't expect to be saved by my generosity, nor by my morality; but then, I have been baptized; I receive the Lord's Supper; I have been confirmed; I go to church, or I have a sitting in a meeting-house; I am, as touching the ceremonies, blameless." Well, friend, in that sense you cannot be saved by works, for all these things have no avail whatever upon the matter of salvation, if you have not faith. If you are saved, God's ordinances will be blessed things to you, but if you are not a believer you have no right to them; and with regard to Baptism and the Supper, every time you touch them you increase your guilt. Whether it be Baptism or the Lord's Supper, you have no right to either, except you be saved already, for they are both ordinances for believers, and for believers only. These ordinances are blessed means of grace to living, quickened, saved souls; but to unsaved souls, to souls dead in trespasses and sins, these outward ordinances can have no avail for good, but may increase their sin, because they touch unworthily the holy things of God. Oh! Rest not in these; oh! Dream not that a priestly hand and sacred drops, or a God-ordained baptism in the pool, can in any way redeem you from sin, or land you in heaven: for by this way, salvation is impossible. But if I drive the lover of self-

righteousness out of this haunt, he runs to another. You will find others who suppose that at least their feelings, which are only their works in another shape, may help to save them. There are thousands who think, "If I could weep so much, and groan so deeply, and experience so much humiliation, and a certain quantity of repentance, and so much of the terrors of the law, and of the thunders of conscience, then I might come before God." Souls, souls, this is work-mongering in its most damnable shape, for it has deluded far more than that bolder sort of work-trusting, which says, "I will rely on what I do." If you rely upon what you feel, you shall as certainly perish as if you trust to what you do. Repentance is a blessed grace, and to be convinced of sin by God the Holy Ghost is a holy privilege, but to think that these in any way win salvation, is to run clean counter to all the teachings of the Word, for salvation is of the free grace of God alone. There are some, moreover, who believe that if their feelings cannot do it, still their knowledge can. They have a very sound creed; they have struck out this doctrine and that; they believe in justification by faith, and their sound creed is to them a confidence. They think that because they hold the theory of justification by faith, therefore they shall be saved. And oh! How they plume their feathers; how they set up their peacock tail because they happen to be orthodox! With what awful pride do they exult over their fellow professors because they hold the truth, and all the rest of the Church they think is deluded with a lie. Now this is nothing but salvation by works, only they are works performed by the head instead of by the hand, and oh! Sirs, I will tell you, if you rest in creeds, if you hope to be saved because you can put your hand to the thirty-nine articles of an Episcopalian prayer-book, or to the solemn league and covenant of the Presbyterian, or to the confession of faith of the Calvinist, if you fancy that because you happen to receive truth in the head you shall be saved, you know not the truth, but still do lie, because you cling to Satan's falsehood, that salvation is of man and not of God. I know that self-righteousness was born in our bone and that it will come out in our flesh and even that man in whom its reigning power is kept down will still feel it sometimes rising up. When he has preached a sermon and has got on pretty well, the devil will come up the pulpit stairs and say "well done." When he has prayed in public and has had unusual fluency, he will have to be careful lest there should be a whisper behind, "What a good and gifted man you are." Ay, and even in his hallowed moments, when he is on the top of the mountain with his Lord, he will have to watch even there, lest self-congratulation should suggest "Oh, man, greatly beloved, there must surely be something in you, or else God would not have done thus unto you." Brethren, when you are thinking of your sanctification, if you are tempted to look away from Christ, away with it; and if when you are repenting of sin you cannot still have one eye on Christ, recollect it will be a repentance that will need to be repented of, for there is nothing in ourselves that can be offered to God. There is a stench and putridity in everything that is done of the creature, and we can never come before God save through Christ Jesus, who is made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

I have thus tried to denounce the plan which God has rejected.