
FURY NOT IN GOD

Thomas Chalmers

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FURY NOT IN GOD

Thomas Chalmers

“Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.”—Isaiah 27:4, 5

THERE are three distinct lessons in this text. The first, that fury is not in God: the second, that He does not want to glorify Himself by the death of sinners—“Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?” the third, the invitation—“Take hold of my strength, that you may make peace with me; and you shall make peace with me.”

I. First, then, FURY IS NOT IN GOD.

But how can this be: is not fury one manifestation of His essential attributes? do we not repeatedly read of His fury—of Jerusalem being full of the fury of the Lord—of God casting the fury of His wrath upon the world—of Him rendering His anger upon His enemies with fury—of Him accomplishing His fury upon Zion—of Him causing His fury to rest on the bloody and devoted city? We are not therefore to think that fury is banished altogether from God’s administration. There are times and occasions when this fury is discharged upon the objects of it; and there must be other times and other occasions when there is no fury in Him.

Now, what is the occasion upon which He disclaims all fury in our text? He is inviting men to reconciliation; He is calling upon them to make peace; and He is assuring them, that if they will only take hold of His strength, they shall make peace with Him. In the preceding verses He speaks of a vineyard; and in the act of inviting people to lay hold of His strength, He is in fact inviting those who are without the limits of the vineyard to enter in. Fury will be discharged on those who reject the invitation. But we cannot say that there is any exercise of fury in God at the time of giving the invitation. There is the most visible and direct contrary. There is a longing desire after you. There is a wish to save you from that day in which the fury of a rejected Saviour will be spread abroad over all who have despised Him. The tone of invitation is not a tone of anger—it is a tone of tenderness. The look which accompanies the invitation is not a look of wrath—it is a look of affection. There may be a time, there may be an occasion, when the fury of God will be put forth on the men who have held out against Him, and turned them away in infidelity and contempt from His beseeching voice; but at the time that He is lifting this voice—at the time that He is sending messengers over the face of the earth to circulate it among the habitations of men—at the time particularly among ourselves, when in our own place and our own day Bibles are within the reach of every family, and ministers in every pulpit are sounding forth the overtures of the gospel throughout the land—surely at such a time and upon such an occasion, it may well be said of God to all who are now seeking His face and favor, that there is no fury in Him.

It is just as in the parable of the marriage feast: many rejected the invitation which the king gave to it—for which he was wroth with many of them, and

sent forth his armies and destroyed them, and burned up their city. On that occasion there was fury in the king, and on the like occasion will there be fury in God. But well can He say at the time when He is now giving the invitation—there is no fury in Me. There is kindness—a desire for peace and friendship—a longing earnestness to make up the quarrel which now subsists between the Lawgiver in heaven and His yet impenitent and unreconciled creatures.

This very process was all gone through at and before the destruction of Jerusalem. It rejected the warnings and invitations of the Saviour, and at length experienced His fury. But there was no fury at the time of His giving the invitations. The tone of our Saviour's voice when He uttered—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," was not the tone of a vindictive and irritated fury. There was compassion in it—a warning and pleading earnestness that they would mind the things which belong to their peace; and at that time when He would willingly have gathered them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings—then may it well be said that there was no fury in the Son of God, no fury in God.

Let us make the application to ourselves in the present day. On the last day there will be a tremendous discharge of fury. That wrath which sinners are now doing so much to treasure up will all be poured forth on them. The season of God's mercy will then have come to an end; and after the sound of the last trumpet, there will never more be heard the sounding call of reconciliation. Oh, my brethren, that God who is grieved and who is angry with sinners every day, will in the last day pour it all forth in one mighty torrent on the heads of the impenitent. It is now gathering and accumulating in a storehouse of vengeance; and at the awful point in the successive history of nature and

providence, when time shall be no more, will the door of this storehouse be opened, that the fury of the Lord may break loose upon the guilty and accomplish upon them the weight and the terror of all His threatenings.

You misunderstand the text, then, my brethren, if you infer from it that fury has no place in the history or methods of God's administration. It has its time and its occasion—and the very greatest display of it is yet to come, when the earth shall be burned up, and the heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

It makes one shudder seriously to think that there may be some here present whom this devouring torrent of wrath shall sweep away; some here present who will be drawn into the whirl of destruction, and forced to take their descending way through the mouth of that pit where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; some here present who so far from experiencing in their own persons that there is no fury in God, will find that throughout the dreary extent of one hopeless and endless and unmitigated eternity, it is the only attribute of His they have to do with. But hear me, hear me ere you have taken your bed in hell; hear me, ere that prison door be shut upon you which is never, never again to be opened? Hear me, hear me, ere the great day of the revelation of God's wrath comes round, and there shall be a total breaking up of that system of things which looks at present so stable and so unalterable? On that awful day I might not be able to take up the text and say there is no fury in God.

But, oh? hear me, for your lives hear me—on this day I can say it. From the place where I now stand I can throw abroad amongst you the wide announcement—that there is no fury in God; and there is not one of you into whose heart this announcement may not enter, and welcome will you be to strike with your beseeching God a league of peace and of friendship that shall never be broken asunder. Surely when I am busy at my delegated employment of holding out the language of entreaty, and of sounding in your ears the tidings of gladness, and of inviting you to enter into the vineyard of God—surely at the time when the messenger of the gospel is thus executing the commission wherewith he is charged and warranted, he may well say—that there is no fury in God. Surely at the time when the Son of God is inviting you to kiss Him and to enter into reconciliation, there is neither the feeling nor the exercise of fury. It is only if you refuse, and if you persist in refusing, and if you suffer all these calls and entreaties to be lost upon you—it is only then that God will execute His fury, and put forth the power of His anger. And therefore He says to us, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Such, then, is the interesting point of time at which you stand. There is no fury in God at the very time that He is inviting you to flee from it. He is sending forth no blasting influence upon the fig-tree, even though hitherto it had borne no fruit, and been a mere cumberer of the ground, when He says, we shall let it alone for another year, and dig it, and dress it and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then let it be afterwards cut down. Now, my brethren, you are all in the situation of this fig-tree; you are for the present let alone; God has purposes of kindness towards every one of you; and as one of His ministers I can now say to you all—that

there is no fury in God. Now when the spiritual husbandman is trying to soften your hearts, he is warranted to make a full use of the argument of my text—that there is no fury in God. Now that the ambassador of Christ is plying you with the offers of grace and of strength to renew and to make you fruitful, he is surely charged with matter of far different import from wrath and threatening and vengeance. Oh! let not all this spiritual husbandry turn out to be unavailing; let not the offer be made now, and no fruit appear afterwards; let not yours be the fate of the barren and unfruitful fig-tree.

The day of the fury of the Lord is approaching. The burning up of this earth and the passing away of these heavens is an event in the history of God's administration to which we are continually drawing nearer; and on that day when the whole of universal nature shall be turned into a heap of ruins, and we shall see the gleam of a mighty conflagration, and shall hear the noise of the framework of creation rending into fragments, and a cry shall be raised from a despairing multitude out of the men of all generations, who have just awoke from their resting-places—and amid all the bustle and consternation that is going on below, such a sight shall be witnessed from the canopy of heaven as will spread silence over the face of the world, and fix and solemnize every individual of its incumbent population.

Oh, my brethren, let us not think that on that day when the Judge is to appear charged with the mighty object of vindicating before men and angels the truth and the majesty of God—that the fury of God will not then appear in bright and burning manifestation. But what I have to tell you on this day is, that fury is not in God—that now is the time of those things which belong to the peace of our eternity, and that if you will

only hear on this the day of your merciful visitation, you will be borne off in safety from all those horrors of dissolving nature, and amid the wild war and frenzy of its reeling elements, will be carried by the arms of love to a place of security and everlasting triumph.

This brings us to the second head of discourse.

II. GOD IS NOT WANTING TO GLORIFY HIMSELF BY THE DEATH OF SINNERS.

“Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?” The wicked and the righteous are often represented in Scripture by figures taken from the vegetable world. The saved and sanctified are called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He might be glorified. The godly man is said to be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth its fruit in its season. The judgment which cometh upon a man is compared to an axe laid to the root of a tree. A tree is said to be known by its fruit; and as a proof that the kind of character of men is specified by the kind of tree in the woods, we read that of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of the bramble-bush gather they grapes. You will observe that the thorn is one of the kinds instanced in the text, and when God says, “I would go through them, I would burn them together,” He speaks of the destruction which cometh on all who remain in the state of thorns and briers; and this agrees with what we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned” (6:8).

Thorns and briers are in other places still more directly employed to signify the enemies of God. “And the light of Israel shall be for a fire,” says one of the

prophets, “and his Holy One for a flame, and it shall burn and devour His thorns and His briers in one day.” Therefore, when God says in the text, “Who would set the thorns and the briers against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together,” He speaks of the ease wherewith He could accomplish His wrath upon His enemies. They would perish before Him like the moth. They could not stand the lifting up of the red right arm of the displeasure of Almighty God. Why set up, then, a contest so unequal as this? Why put the wicked in battle array against Him who could go through them and devour them in an instant by the breath of His fury? God is saying in the text that this is not what He is wanting. He does not want to set Himself forth as an enemy, or as a strong man armed against them for the battle—it is a battle He is not at all disposed to enter into. The glory He would achieve by a victory over a host so feeble, is not a glory that His heart is at all set upon.

Oh, no! ye children of men. He has no pleasure in your death; He is not seeking to magnify Himself by the destruction of so paltry a foe; He could devour you in a moment; He could burn you up like stubble; and you mistake it if you think that renown on so poor a field of contest is a renown that He is at all aspiring after. Who would set the grasshoppers in battle array against the giants? Who would set thorns and briers in battle array against God? This is not what He wants: He would rather something else. Be assured, He would rather you were to turn, and to live, and to come into His vineyard, and submit to the regenerating power of His spiritual husbandry, and be changed from the nature of an accursed plant to a tree of righteousness. In the language of the next verse, He would rather that this enemy of His, not yet at peace with Him, and who may therefore be likened to a brier or a thorn—He

would rather than he remained so that he should take hold of God's strength, that he may make peace with Him—and as the fruit of his so doing, he shall make peace with Him.

Now tell me if this does not open up a most wonderful and a most inviting view of God? It is the real attitude in which He puts Himself forth to us in the gospel of His Son. He there says, in the hearing of all to whom the word of this salvation is sent, "Why will ye die?" It is true that by your death He could manifest the dignity of His Godhead; He could make known the power of His wrath; He could spread the awe of His truth and His majesty over the whole territory of His government, and send forth to its uttermost limits the glories of His strength and His immutable sovereignty. But He does not want to magnify Himself over men in this way; He has no ambition whatever after the renown of such a victory, over such weak and insignificant enemies. Their resistance were no trial whatever to His strength or to His greatness. There is nothing in the destruction of creatures so weak that can at all bring Him any distinction, or throw any aggrandizement around Him. And so in Scripture everywhere do we see Him pleading and protesting with you that He does not want to signalize Himself upon the ruin of any, but would rather that they should turn and be saved.

And now, my brethren, what remains for you to do? God is willing to save you: are you willing to be saved? The way is set before you most patiently and clearly in the Bible—nay, the very text, brief as it is, points out to you the way, as I shall endeavor to explain and set before you in the third head of discourse. But meanwhile, and all the better to secure a hearing from you, let me ask you to lay it upon your con-

sciences, whether you are in a state that will do for you to die in.

If not, then I beseech you to think how certainly death will, and how speedily it may, come upon the likeliest of you all. The very youngest among you know very well, that if not cut off previously—which is a very possible thing—then manhood will come, and old age will come, and the dying bed will come, and the very last look you shall ever cast on your acquaintances will come, and the agony of the parting breath will come, and the time when you are stretched a lifeless corpse before the eyes of weeping relatives will come, and the coffin that is to enclose you will come, and that hour when the company assemble to carry you to the churchyard will come, and the minute when you are put into the grave will come, and the throwing in of the loose earth into the narrow house where you are laid, and the spreading of the green sod over it—all, all will come on every living creature who now hears me; and in a few little years the minister who now speaks, and the people who now listen, will be carried to their long homes, and make room for another generation.

Now, all this, you know, must and will happen—your common sense and common experience serve to convince you of it. Perhaps it may have been little thought of in the days of careless and thoughtless and thankless unconcern which you have spent hitherto; but I call upon you to think of it now, to lay it seriously to heart, and no longer to trifle and delay, when the high matters of death and judgment and eternity are thus set so evidently before you. And the tidings wherewith I am charged—and the blood lieth upon your own head and not upon mine, if you will not listen to them—the object of my coming amongst you is to let you know what things are to come; it is to carry you beyond the regions of sight and of sense, to the

regions of faith, and to assure you, in the name of Him who cannot lie, that as sure as the hour of laying the body in the grave comes, so surely will also come the hour of the spirit returning to the God who gave it.

Yes, and the day of final reckoning will come, and the appearance of the Son of God in heaven, and His mighty angels around Him, will come, and the opening of the books will come, and the standing of the men of all generations before the judgment-seat will come, and the solemn passing of that sentence which is to fix you for eternity will come. Yes, and if you refuse to be reconciled in the name of Christ, now that He is beseeching you to be so, and if you refuse to turn from the evil of your ways, and to do and to be what your Saviour would have you, I must tell you what that sentence is to be—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

There is a way of escape from the fury of this tremendous storm. There is a pathway of egress from the state of condemnation to the state of acceptance. There is a method pointed out in Scripture by which we, who by nature are the children of wrath, may come to be at peace with God. Let all ears be open then to our explanation of this way, as we bid you in the language of our text take hold of God's strength, that you may make peace with Him, and which if you do, you shall make peace with Him.

III. GOD WOULD GREATLY PREFER THAT THEY TOOK HOLD OF HIS STRENGTH IN ORDER TO MAKE PEACE WITH HIM.

Read now the fifth verse—"Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." Or here is the same with

rather. Rather than that what is spoken of in the fourth verse should fall upon you—rather than that I should engage in battle with mine enemies—rather than that a result so melancholy to them should take place, as my going through them and burning them together—rather than that all this should happen, I WOULD GREATLY PREFER THAT THEY TOOK HOLD OF MY STRENGTH IN ORDER TO MAKE PEACE WITH ME; and I promise, as the sure effect of this proceeding, that THEY SHALL MAKE PEACE WITH ME.

We have not far to seek for what is meant by this strength, for Isaiah himself speaks (ch. 33:6) of the strength of salvation. It is not your destruction but your salvation that God wants to put forth His strength in. There has strength been already put forth in the deliverance of a guilty world—the very strength which He wants you to lay hold of. He will be glorified in the destruction of the sinner, but He would like better to be glorified by his salvation. To destroy you is to do no more than to set fire to briars and thorns, and to consume them; but to save you—this is indeed the power of God and the wisdom of God—this is the mighty achievement which angels desire to look into—this is the enterprise upon which a mighty Captain embarked all the energy that belonged to Him, and travelled in the greatness of His strength until that He accomplished it; and now that it is accomplished, God would much rather be glorified in the salvation of His saints, than glorified in the destruction of sinners (2 Thess 1:7,10). God will show His wrath, and make His power known in the destruction of the sinner. But it is a more glorious work of power to redeem that sinner, and thus He engages to do for you, if you will take hold of His strength. He would greatly prefer this way of making His power known. He does not want to enter into the battle with you, or to

consume you like stubble by the breath of His indignation. No; He wants to transform sinners into saints: He wants to transform vessels of wrath into vessels of mercy, and to make known the riches of His glory on those whom He had afore prepared unto glory.

There is a strength put forth in the destruction of the sinner, but there is also a strength put forth in the salvation of a sinner, and this is the strength which He wants you to lay hold of in my text—this is the strength by the display of which He would prefer being glorified. He would rather decline entering into a contest with you sinners; for to gain a victory over you would be no more to Him than to fight with the briars and the thorns, and to consume them. But from enemies to make friends of you; from the children of wrath to transform you into the children of adoption; from the state of guilt to accomplish such a mighty and a wonderful change upon you, as to put you into the state of justification; from the servants of sin to make you in the day of His power the willing servants of God; to chase away from your faculties the darkness of nature, and to make all light and comfort around you; to turn you from a slave of sense, and to invest with all their rightful ascendancy over your affections the things of eternity; to pull down the strongholds of corruption within you, and raise him who was spiritually dead to a life of new obedience—this is the victory over you which God aspires after. It is not your destruction or your death that He delights in, or that He wants to be glorified by—it is your thorough and complete salvation from the punishment of sin, and the power of sin, on which He is desirous of exalting the glory of His strength, and this is the strength which He calls you to take hold upon.

Let me now, in what remains, first say a few things more upon this strength, the strength of salva-

tion which is spoken of in the text, and then state very briefly what it is to lay hold of it.

And first we read of a mighty strength that had to be put forth in the work of a sinner's justification. You know that all men are sinners, and so all are under the righteous condemnation of God. How, in the name of all that is difficult and wonderful, can these sinners ever get this condemnation removed from them? By what new and unheard of process can the guilty before God ever again become justified in His sight? How from that throne, of which it is said that judgment and justice are the habitation, can the sentence of acquittal ever be heard on the children of iniquity? How can God's honor be kept entire in the sight of angels, if we men who have repeatedly mocked Him and insulted Him, and made our own wish and our own way take the precedency of His high and solemn requirements—if we, with all this contempt of the Lawgiver expressed in our lives, and all this character of rebellion against Him written upon our foreheads, shall be admitted to a place of distinction in heaven—and that too after God has committed Himself in the hearing of angels—after He had given us a law by the disposition of angels, and we had not kept it—and after He had said how the wicked shall not go unpunished, but that cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of God's law to do them? But what is more, it was not merely the good and the obedient angels who knew our rebellion—the malignant and fallen angels not only knew it, but they devised and they prompted it. And how, I would ask, can God keep the awful majesty of His truth and justice entire in the sight of His adversaries, if Satan and the angels of wickedness along with him shall have it in their power to say—we prevailed on man to insult Him by sin, and

have compelled God to put up with the affront, and to connive at it?

Now, just in proportion to the weight and magnitude of the obstacle was the greatness of that strength which the Saviour put forth in the mighty work of moving it away. We have no adequate conception upon this matter, and must just take our lesson from revelation about it;—and whether we take the prophecies which foretold the work of our Redeemer, or the history which relates it, or the doctrine which expatiates on its worth and its efficacy—all go to establish that there was the operation of a power—that there was the severity of a conflict—that there was the high emprise of an arduous and mighty warfare—that there were all the throes and all the exertions of a struggling, and at length a prevailing energy in the execution of that work which our Saviour had to do—that He had a barrier to surmount, and that, too, with the cries and the pains and the sorrows of heavy suffering and labor—that a mighty obstacle lay before Him, and He, in the business of removing it, had to travel in all the greatness of the faculties which belonged to Him—that there was a burden laid upon His shoulders, which by no one else but the Prince of Peace could have been borne—that there was a task put into His hand which none but He could fulfil.

And had the question ever been reasoned throughout the hosts of paradise, Who can so bend the unchangeable attributes of God, who can give them a shift so wonderful, that the sinners who have insulted Him may be taken into forgiveness, and His honor be kept untainted and entire? There is not one of the mighty throng who would not have shrunk from an enterprise so lofty. There is not one of them who could at once magnify the law and release man from its violated sanctions. There is not one of them who could

turn its threatening away from us, and at the same time give to the truth and the justice of God their brightest manifestation. There is not one of them who could unravel the mystery of our redemption through all the difficulties which beset and which surround it. There is not one of them who, by the strength of his arm, could have obtained the conquest over these difficulties. And however little we may enter into the elements of this weighty speculation, let us forget not that the question was not merely between God and man—it was between God and all the creatures He had formed. They saw the dilemma; they felt how deeply it involved the character of the Deity; they perceived its every bearing on the majesty of His attributes, and on the stability of the government that was upheld by Him. With them it was a matter of deep and most substantial interest; and when the Eternal Son stepped forward to carry the undertaking to its end, the feeling amongst them all was that a battle behoved to be fought, and that the strength of this mighty Captain of our salvation was alone equal to the achievement of the victory.

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought

salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me” (Isa 63:1-5).

A way of redemption has been found out in the unsearchable riches of divine wisdom, and Christ is called the wisdom of God. But the same Christ is also called the power of God. In the mighty work of redemption He put forth a strength, and it is that strength that we are called to take hold upon. There was a wonderful strength in bearing the wrath which would have fallen on the millions and millions more of a guilty world. There was a strength which bore Him up under the agonies of the garden. There was a strength which supported Him under the hidings of His Father’s countenance. There was a strength which upheld Him in the dark hour of the travail of His soul, and which one might think had well-nigh given way when He called out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” There was a strength which carried Him in triumph through the contest over Satan, when he buffeted Him with his temptations; and a strength far greater than we know of in that mysterious struggle which He held with the powers of darkness, when Satan fell like lightning from heaven, and the Captain of our salvation spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, and triumphed over them. There was strength in over-coming all the mighty difficulties which lay in the way between the sinner and God, in unbarring the gates of acceptance to a guilty world, in bringing truth and mercy to meet, and righteousness and peace to enter into fellowship—so that God might be just, while He is the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

So much for the strength which is put forth in the work of man’s redemption. But there is also strength put forth in the work of man’s regeneration. Christ hath not only done a great work for us in making good

our reconciliation with God—He further does a great work in us when He makes us like unto God. But I have not the time to dwell upon this last topic, and must content myself with referring you to the following Scriptures—Eph. 1:19, 2:10; Phil. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9,10; John 15:5. The power which raised Jesus from the dead is the power which raises us from our death in trespasses and sins. The power that was put forth on creation is the power that makes us new creatures in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Neither have I time to make out a full demonstration of what is meant by laying hold of that strength. When you apply to a friend for some service, some relief from distress or difficulty, you may be said to lay hold of him; and when you place firm reliance both on his ability and willingness to do you the service, you may well say that your hold is upon your friend—an expression which becomes all the more appropriate should he promise to do the needful good office, in which case your hold is not upon his power only, but upon his faithfulness.

And it is even so with the promises of God in Christ Jesus—you have both a power and a promise to take hold of. If you believe that Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him, and if you believe the honesty of His invitation to all who are weary and heavy-laden, that they might come unto Him and have rest unto their souls, thus judging Him to be faithful who has promised, then indeed will you lay hold of Christ as the power of God unto salvation, and according to the faith which has thus led you to fix upon the Saviour so will it be done unto you. To continue in this faith is in the language of Scripture to hold fast your confidence and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end. Cast not away this confidence which hath great recompense of reward; or if you have

not yet begun to place this confidence in the assurances of the gospel, lay hold of them now—they are addressed to each and to all of you. It is not a vague generality of which I am speaking. Let every man amongst you take up with Christ, and trust in Him for yourself.

I am well aware that unless the Spirit reveal to you, all I have said about Him will fall fruitless upon your ears, and your hearts will remain as cold and as heavy and as alienated as ever. Faith is His gift, and it is not of ourselves. But the minister is at his post when he puts the truth before you; and you are at your posts when you hearken diligently, and have a prayerful spirit of dependence on the Giver of all wisdom—that He will bless the word spoken, and make it reach your souls in the form of a salutary and convincing application.

And it is indeed wonderful—it is passing wonderful, that there should be about us such an ungenerous suspicion of our Father who is in heaven. It cannot be sufficiently wondered at that all the ways in which He sets Himself forth to us should have so feeble an influence in the way of cheering us on to a more delighted confidence. How shall we account for it—that the barrier of unbelief should stand so obstinately firm in spite of every attempt and every remonstrance—that the straitening should still continue—not the straitening of God towards us, for He has said everything to woo us to put our trust in Him—but the straitening of us towards God, whereby in the face of His every kind and exhilarating declaration we persist in being cold and distant and afraid of Him?

I know not, my brethren, in how far I may have succeeded, as an humble and unworthy instrument, in drawing aside the veil which darkens the face of Him who sitteth on the throne. But oh, how imposing is the

attitude, and how altogether affecting is the argument with which He comes forward to us in the text of this day! It is not so much His saying that there is no fury in Him—this He often tells us in other passages of Scripture; but the striking peculiarity of the words now submitted to us is the way in which He would convince us how little interest He can have in our destruction, and how far it is from His thoughts to aspire after the glory of such an achievement, as if He had said—it would be nothing to Me to consume you all by the breath of My indignation—it would throw no illustration over Me to sweep away the whole strength of that rebellion which you have mustered up against Me—it would make no more to My glory than if I went through the thorns and briers and burned them before Me. This is not the battle I want to engage in—this is not the victory by which I seek to signalize Myself; and you mistake Me, you mistake Me, ye feeble children of men, if you think that I aspire after anything else with any one of you than that you should be prevailed on to come into My vineyard, and lay hold of My strength, and seek to make peace with Me, and you shall make peace with Me.

The victory that My heart is set upon is not a victory over your persons—that is a victory that will easily be gotten in the great day of final reckoning over all who have refused My overtures, and would none of My reproof, and have turned them away from my beseeching offers of reconciliation. In that great day of the power of Mine anger it will be seen how easy it is to accomplish such a victory as this—how rapidly the fire of my conflagration will involve the rebels who have opposed Me in that devouring flame from which they never, never can be extricated—how speedily the execution of the condemning sentence will run through the multitude who stand at the left hand of the Aveng-

ing Judge; and rest assured, ye men who are now hearing Me, and whom I freely invite all to enter into the vineyard of God, that this is not the triumph that God is longing after. It is not a victory over your persons then of which He is at all ambitious—it is a victory over your wills now—it is that you do honor to His testimony by placing your reliance on it—it is that you accept of His kind and free assurances that He has no ill-will to you—it is that you cast the whole burden of sullen fear and suspicion away from your hearts, and that now, even now, you enter into a fellowship of peace with the God whom you have offended.

Oh! be prevailed upon. I know that terror will not subdue you; I know that all the threatenings of the law will not reclaim you; I know that no direct process of pressing home the claims of God upon your obedience will ever compel you to the only obedience that is of any value in His estimation—even the willing obedience of the affections to a father whom you love. But surely when He puts on in your sight the countenance of a Father—when He speaks to you with the tenderness of a Father—when He tries to woo you back to that house of His from which you have wandered, and, to persuade you of His good-will, descends so far as to reason the matter, and to tell you that He is no more seeking any glory from your destruction than He would seek glory from lighting into a blaze the thorns and the briers, and burning them together—ah! my brethren, should it not look plain to the eye of faith how honest and sincere the God of your redemption is, who is thus bowing Himself down to the mention of such an argument! Do lay hold of it, and be impressed by it, and cherish no longer any doubt of the good-will of the Lord God, merciful and gracious; and let your faith work by love to Him who hath done so much and said so much to engage it, and let this love evince all

the power of a commanding principle within you, by urging your every footstep to the new obedience of new creatures in Jesus Christ your Lord.

Thus the twofold benefit of the gospel will be realized by all who believe and obey that gospel. Reconciled to God by the death of His Son, regenerated by the power of that mighty and all-subduing Spirit who is at the giving of the Son, your salvation will be complete—washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.



How to Die to Self is a beacon in the current evangelical landscape. The world, and much of the visible church with it, has turned its back on submission to the will of God in daily life. Instead it is in an all out quest for personal affluence and happiness, in a word: *selfishness*. There is an assumption that “as long as we do not directly violate one of God’s overt commands in the Bible, we are ‘free’ to enjoy life and do what we want.” And “what we want” becomes a never-ending pursuit for the next pleasurable thing, i.e., “what would *I enjoy today!*” But the Scriptures speak plainly that “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). G. D. Watson speaks from the heart in searching out how to practically apply this in our lives.

George D. Watson (1845-1923) was born in Virginia into a committed Christian family with six children. As a youth, he was self-willed. His conversion came during the American Civil War, after he joined the Southern Army at age 18, during a camp meeting for soldiers, when he gave his life to Christ. He began holding prayer meetings of his own, with endless enthusiasm for his new Master. In poor health after the war, he attended a Bible institute and began to preach the Gospel in 1868, pastoring several churches. He came to an unusual whole-hearted commitment to the Lord, a “death to self” that allowed him long periods of uninterrupted communion and spiritual fervor with the living God. Later he traveled extensively throughout the USA, several times to England, and the Far East.