

THE PLANTING OF THE LORD THAT HE MIGHT BE GLORIFIED

By

James Ormiston of Bristol, June 11th, 1891.

THE PLANTING OF THE LORD THAT HE MIGHT BE GLORIFIED

By. J. Ormiston, 1892

“Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright: He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”- Psalm 92: 13-15.

What a subject for meditation! If we were to summarize our subject, we should say it set forth in God’s own language, the gracious prosperity of His own dear people, the gracious prosperity of the saints of the living God. I use the word *saints*, a word, about which there is no little misunderstanding in these days of religious confusion. What is it that constitutes a sinner a saint? None of us are born saints; all of us have been born sinners. What is it that essentially constitutes of a sinner a saint? Emphatically, dear friends, *the new birth*. “*Except a man (sinful man) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” which comprises only saints. To become a saint is not an experience of a progressive character; but, the moment a sinner is by **the sovereign pleasure of God regenerated, born of the Holy Ghost, born from above**, he then and there, and therefore, becomes a saint, because to be a saint, implies a **partaker of the Divine nature**. It is not, dear friends, **the accommodating of an old nature to a better nature, but a super-adding, a new creating of that which was not before; so that, in the case of every regenerated person, as many of you feelingly and painfully know, there are found TWO NATURES; the old Adam nature, unchangeable in the direction of God –** I do not know whether it is possible for it to get worse, it is **totally depraved –and the new nature which is certainly unchangeable in the direction of evil, and, being born from above, of God, a NEW CREATION IN CHRIST JESUS, IS NOT ONLY SINLESS, BUT, INCAPABLE OF SINNING**, God’s Word being witness that “*that which is born of God doth not commit sin,” it cannot, because it is a **DIVINE SEED***. (I John 3:9). These are they which constitutes the saints, of whom the Holy Scriptures speak such great and glorious things: all of them by nature, sinners; all of them by grace, saints. No degrees in this matter of saintship. No one regenerated saint more a saint than another, in **God’s family**; not one loved before another, less, or more than another; all before the foundation of the world; God, the Father loved His people, each and all of

them, a countless number though they prospectively were: He loved them with all His heart: each one in particular did He love with all His soul, and, it required all the work of Christ, His life, death, blood, righteousness and merits to secure the salvation of each one of these, a whole Christ for each, and yet that one Christ for all. – No favourites in **God’s family**, but, all favoured alike with the whole-hearted love of a common Father ***in Christ***.

Now, it is of these, dear friends, that our text speaks to-day. They are likened here to trees; whereas, if you notice, earlier in this Psalm, the wicked, the unconverted, are likened to grass (verse 7), “*The wicked spring up as the grass.*” (verse 12). “*The righteous flourish like the palm tree.*” What withers more quickly than grass? What endures as the palm tree? Century by century there it stands, erect and fruitful to the last, deriving its life from some hidden source, for it seems to grow and flourish most richly in the dry barren sand of the desert; but, its roots strike down far below, and search for the moisture, and finds that *vital moisture* and drink it up, and it mounts to the highest branches of that stately tree, and speaks its own language in prolific fruit, increasing in measure as years pass by. The *grass* withered long since. The wicked are such. God’s people are likened to that which endures, that which is indestructible, and, to that which is to the end, fruitful.

Planted! “*Those that be planted in the house of the Lord.*” God’s people, dear friends, do not, as a *matter of course*, find a standing in the house of the Lord. They are all of them a **transplanted people**, wild by nature, sought out and found by the Lord Himself in the day of His favour, transferred, and by the **quickening, regenerating work** to which I referred at the outset, made a **new creature in Christ Jesus**, in whom, “*ye who were afar off, are brought nigh.*”

“So near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be,
For **in** the Person of His Son,
I am as near as He.”

Planted! Very tender plants at the outset; very fragile, very unpromising, many of the Lord’s dear people are when the Lord begins His sovereign work of grace in them and upon them: how frequently they tremble in their own souls at what the Lord is doing; the “*terrible thing in righteousness*” being revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, they now see themselves to be what they never had before realized, guilty, hell-deserving sinners. “*cut off for their parts,*” shut up to the thunder of God’s broken law, how can they hope to escape the wrath to come. But

“The work which His goodness began,

The arm of His strength will complete.”

And, if He go the length of quickening, and giving him a place amongst the living, however that sinner, in the strangeness of his position, misjudges his own case, the Lord, being “*His own interpreter*” will presently make it simply, sublimely, and Divinely plain.

There are those here, who can look back upon those early phases of spiritual experience, and almost smile at the ignorance then betrayed; ignorance of the inscrutable ways of this wonder-working God of salvation. Long now, you have walked in the way of faith, and humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and, by the acquisition of knowledge, have arrived at this conclusion, that “*the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works,*” unerring in all His methods: no failure in His scheme. What reason we have to bless God that all of salvation wholly belongs to Himself: that He has never delegated any of it, either in whole or the minutest part to any creature however exalted; to none of those powers in heavenly places of whom we know little, but often read; and certainly not to any earthly church, or religious system, body of ecclesiastical men, or individual saint or sinner. “*Power belongeth unto God.*” “*Salvation is of the Lord,*” said Jonas of his experience, and “*the Lord knoweth them that are His.*” And, when He wills to work upon the most unpromising materials, it is His delight to bring the impossible to pass, “*that no flesh should glory in His sight,*” but all the praise and honor be His, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is the Husbandman; and, when, dear friends, He *plants* in the riches of His grace, a poor needy sinner in the courts of acceptance, who can pluck up that plant, who can harm that plant, or hinder its fragile growth? He waters it, nourishes it; secretly very often, so far as the subject of His operation is concerned, and unconsciously to him. O dear children of God, you often go away, as the Gospel sermon, to your thinking, comes too soon to an end, and you go mourning over what you think is your unprofited soul. Are you capable of forming so determinate a judgment of the sovereign ways of Him who giveth no account of His matters, because you and I are not able to trace definitely a blessing upon any particular occasion under the preached Word of God? We dare not conclude that God’s Word has returned unto Him void, that we know the secret of the purpose that sent it forth. Rather let us pause, let us reverently wait, let us tarry the fulfillment of His promise. It may be that the mere passage of that sanctifying Word of His through our minds has effected a purifying process, too subtle and too spiritual for us in our unspirituality to divine.

I remember reading in one of the old divines, a case of a dear fried child of God who used to mourn very much over her inability to remember the things of God which she felt to be profitable while she sat under the Word preached; she could not retain the blessed things she loved to hear and feast upon, and it was explained to her very wisely. I have felt thankful for it, since it was pointed out in her by him, that though she did not retain much of what she heard, she nevertheless got benefit and blessing, illustrating the case this way – “although the pipe through which the water passes does not retain the water, yet the pipe is all the cleaner for the water having passed through it.” And so, I

believe it is as he explained: that these poor minds of ours which often fail to retain the precious things we hear expounded by God's dear servants, are sanctified in measure by the passage of God's purifying Word through our souls. We are not, I take it, dear friends, competent to form emphatic judgments upon our own case, as to how far we have not received blessing on any particular occasion under the faithful Word of God: let us bless Him if He hath given us the hearing ear, the delightful understanding heart, and the approving spiritual judgment whilst His Word is faithfully set forth in our midst; nor may we forget the office of the Holy Spirit, that office of His as He is the Remembrancer; that He can take "the things of Christ," passed from our conscious memories for a season, and bring them all back with marvelous accuracy of detail to our minds, and we cannot account for it sometimes, how it is that the Holy Spirit – for it must be He – brings back definitely and circumstantially, truth of God's Word long passed from these poor frail memories of ours. He planted the Word, He Himself it was who dropped the precious Word into our souls, and it was that **incorruptible seed left**, though slumbering.

The Word of God is like the grace of faith, of which, if you remember, Jesus spake when He said, "*if ye had faith but as a mustard seed, ye should say thus and thus, and it should come to pass.*" A grain of mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds. I remember dear Mr. Gowing years and years ago, referring to that illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ: that He did not liken the beginning of grace to a grain of *sand*, but to *mustard seed* for smallness. He might have used the former, but the grain of sand is not a **vital thing**. The grain of mustard **seed** is **vital**: the principle of **life** is wrapped up in it: a question only of *conditions* for it to vegetate, but the *sand* never would: life is not there. So, I say, in regard to the Word of God, the incorruptible Word, it may be a very remarkable portion, it may be minute in its apparent character, but, being the eternal Word of God, there is **life in it**. The "*incorruptible Word that liveth and abideth forever*" has eternal life in it. If the Lord, the Spirit of Life, be pleased to energize it, if He drop the Living Word though but a little one, into the corner of a waiting sinner's heart, who dare say what it shall not effect? O, children of God, despise not even for a moment the day of the Lord's small things: it is of the Lord's glory to make of the *little one a thousand*, "*the lame take the prey*" in this matter of spiritual experience, in the inevitable conflict with the world, flesh and devil: this battle is not to "*the strong*," nor this race to "*the swift*."

I give, dear friends, these hasty and few remarks upon the work of the Spirit, just in connection with that operation of the planting of the Lord's people in the courts of His Presence, in order that any here may answer the question if it arises in the minds. Am I one of the Lord's plantings? Have I a place in the Lord's house? Am I one of His living children? Do I answer to the pattern of *the saint* to whom the minister referred, planted in the House of the Lord?

I was thinking, in anticipation of this simple address this afternoon, of the illustration of **eternal vital force of union**. We do not understand what vegetable growth

is: why the *seed* should not grow *before it is put in the soil*, and, why it does grow *after it is put in the soil*. The Lord Himself emphasized that ignorance – a man sowed seed, and rose and slept, and the seed grew, *he knew not how*, but it did grow, and presently came forth, “*first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.*” The kingdom of God is like that: we see that the Lord drops His Word, the incorruptible seed, of purpose, in a sinner’s heart: it takes root, comes forth, is very tender at first, the blade very feeble and liable to damage, as we look at it, but never in reality, it comes forth, “*First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.*”

I was speaking about **union**, the planting, the coming together of seed and soil: then was given me that word in the Epistle to the Colossians, seventh verse, second chapter: “*Rooted and built up in Him.*” To be planted in the House of the Lord is to have **union with and in Him**; union **with** Him, **with** Christ, the risen, glorified, ruling, reigning Christ! I say, **union, UNION**, because, I cannot say I entertain the slightest sympathy with that *superficial, modern union between the believer and Christ, which is a mere faith union*. Faith is fitful: it ebbs and flows; and if it were so, *union ebbs and flows* as well. No, dear friends, the **union between Christ and the believer is a union of life**, not that which is subject to fluctuations: there is no change in Christ the **Life** of the **union** between Himself, the Head of the Church, and every member of that Church in particular. The **life** which Christ **is**, is the measure of the union between Christ and His people, and **if He know no change or variableness, then is the union between the believer and Christ, and Christ and the believer, not only indissoluble, but incapable of fluctuation**. Our enjoyment of the fullness of that union is *one* point – I speak of the blessed fruits it involves, rooted and grounded **in** Him.

Now the illustration: if we turn to the 25th chapter of the Book of Exodus, we read there an inspired account of the construction of the mercy seat, which God Himself commanded Moses to make, and which, if you remember, was the solid golden lid of the Ark of the Covenant, that little coffer of shittim wood, covered with precious plates of beaten gold containing the two tables of stone hidden away, because covered with this lid of gold which exactly corresponded to the dimensions of the Ark, exactly covering the Ten Commandments.

Now, “*of the matter of the mercy seat,*” – for so the margin speaks – of the matter of that golden lid of the Ark there were beaten out two symbolic creatures: What they were precisely we know not: they were by the God-directed skill of the craftsmen beaten out of the material of that mercy seat, **not formed and then brought into union with the golden lid**, or, the mercy seat, but of the very matter of that mercy seat, essentially of the matter of that lid of gold, for they were evolved from it, beaten out of it, manifested, in other words, as **in union with that golden lid of the Ark**. We understand so much about them, as that they had faces and wings: we know, further, how they stretched forth their wings, and how, as to the inclination of their faces, standing one at one end, and the other at the other end of the lid of gold, they turned their faces both inward and

downward: they appeared to contemplate one object, their eyes downward upon the mercy seat, which, upon the great day of atonement was sprinkled with the blood of Sacrifice. Consequently, these symbolic ones appeared to contemplate the blood upon the Divinely ordained covering of the Ten Commandments. Yet, more than that between these two symbolic creatures, and immediately above the blood dwelt the *Shechinah*, which symbolized Jehovah's real, local presence, so that Deity inhabited the cherubim, and rested on the blood: *that* was the subject those mystic creatures contemplated, into which they desired earnestly to look: rooted, they were, and grounded in the Mercy-seat. **There is union.**

God's quickened people have been a people **ever in and of an anti-typical Mercy-seat. The first chapter to the Ephesians teaches you and me, so simply and authoritatively that God's people are a people chosen IN Christ before the foundation of the world: *in Him*, and, that in the fullness of Gospel times they should all be manifested as being *in Him*, brought to the knowledge of the Truth, to see the need of the blood, and the perfected salvation, the covenant salvation of the living God;** and, that, I trust it is, beloved hearers, which brings us here together in the Spirit of the cherubim to-day, to look into these things, to gaze by faith upon the precious blood, and to realize that our own God, the God of all salvation is dwelling in our midst. Planted in the House of the Lord, as these cherubim were planted in the innermost court of the House of the Lord, for the Holy of Holies was their proper dwelling-place.

"They shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall bring forth fruit in old age." Flourish! All of the Lord's people quickened by the Spirit, are thereby made partakers of a Life which is in the Holy Scriptures designated, "everlasting life," and "eternal life." These are evergreen trees of the Lord's planting: they are His masterpiece of power and wisdom, and grace, and Truth, and, I take it, that the Church of the living God has *obtained* to be the wonder of heaven itself, the wonder of the heaven of heavens.

When God made this world, pure, fair, sinless, and, in measure, so far as the creature could reflect the character of the Creator, showing forth the invisible things of God, namely, His power and His Godhead, it yet was a creation in which God could not rest. We are told in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis, that on the seventh day the Lord God rested *from* all the works that He had made. Not *in*. He rested *from* making, He rested *from* creating, He ceased working, not because He was weary, but rested *in* the sense of no longer continuing the work of creation, but did **not** rest **in** that creation, because that creation was fallible, subject to variableness, and it fell presently, alas, from the hand of the holy Creator. God could not rest in that which is fallible: God could only rest in the immutable, nor did He please to rest in Jesus alone. *"The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, and the last Adam a quickening Spirit."* The second man, the Lord from heaven, the *last* Adam, not the *second*, there is no *second* Adam because there is no third! *First* Adam and *last* Adam, only two covenant heads, the one a failure, the other, perfection indeed. No *third* Adam. A covenant of words wrecked in the

person of the first man; a covenant of grace, stable as God's eternal throne, in the Person of the second man, the last Adam. Why the two men? Because God will to have a man, a perfect man, in whom to rest for ever, who is that second man of whom the the Apostle speaks.

Take the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians for instance, where you have the ascension gifts of the Lord Jesus enumerated; the gifts He received in Himself as the representative Man when He sat down at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places: those gifts of ministries which He gave, "*some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come*" – to what? "*The measure of the stature of the perfect man,*" that is, the whole company of God's redeemed people, quickened and glorified, manifested "*as of the matter of the mercy seat,*" in **union eternal with Him. There is the perfect man**, the infallible, ideal man of God, in whom God will everlastingly dwell. "*This shall be My rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it,*" or, set My heart upon it. This is God's everlasting thought, to have this perfect man, namely Jesus, and the Church, the Head and the body, indissoluble as His abiding place, this, I take it, is the House, "*whose House are we,*" planted, stone by stone placed in this mystical temple of the living God. Who shall displace one of these living stones? As well speak of breaking that foundation which is the Rock of Ages, as that *one*, the *least* of the Lord's eternally loved and presented, blood-bought people shall be disturbed even for a little moment from his position in the holy House of God.

"*The Lord is thy Keeper.*" The Lord places His people in this Church as seemeth Him good, even as He has placed these literal bones in our own human body as it hath pleased Him, and dispersed the various members of our natural bodies as it seemed good in His sight, the least comely members sometimes the most honourable. So, in the spiritual, mystic body of Christ: one member cannot say of, or, to another, "*I have no need of thee,*" and because we are not all one member, but, have appointed to us diversity of service and suffering, diversity of testimony, diversity of worship, diversity of obedience, we may not argue with ourselves, "*Because I am not as my brother, I am not a child of God.*" No, no! the greatest wonder of all is this, that the Head, which is Christ, cannot say to the feet, "*I have no need of thee.*" But we can understand in some little measure, how each may question, Can I be right with God? Can I be a true-born son or daughter of the Lord Almighty, when things are with me thus? O, think in answer to that inquiry of what the thoughts of the Lord Jesus upon such a member would necessarily have to be. Are these *My members*? What, this My Simon Peter, who can deny he knows the man and that with oaths and curses? O no, Jesus looks down upon this one and this one in particular, for I notice this, and you must have noticed the same; how, when Jesus said to His disciples, "*Satan hath desired to have you and sift you* (plural number) *as wheat.*" He turned to Peter and said, "*I have prayed for thee*" (singular number). Peter of all others: his was a case that lay most near the heart of Jesus, for He knew the frailties of that poor worm of the earth. The Head cannot say to

those members of His mystical body which come more near defilement, as the feet do on the earth, *“I have no need of you.”* He *needs* every member of His eternal mystical body: for one of those to be absent or overlooked, would be a dishonour done to the fullness and sufficiency of Jesus, the efficacy and blood of Jesus, to the prevalency of the intercession of Jesus. He needs *you*, poor, weak, faltering, trembling, backsliding child of God.

Rooted in Him! None can pluck up. Built up in Him! None can cast down! Little wonder that every stone in the walls of this heavenly House should show forth the praises of Him whose house it is. You must have noticed when we read at the outset our great text, that there is a practical expansion of it. All these things are true of the plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting in order to show what the Lord is, *“that the Lord is upright.”* That is the secret. *“Not for your sakes O House of Israel, have I done this, but for Mine own great name’s sake.”* Moses was well in the secret of these deeper things of the salvation of Israel: and how he used to plead with the Lord, *“What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?”* He did not plead the righteousness of the people, or the obedience of the people, or the integrity of the people: no, he mourned over, and confessed, the rebelliousness of the people, the stiff-neckedness of the people, the backslidings of the people, and betook himself under the character of the God of the Covenant, the immutable God of immutable promise, and argued in holy fear and gracious reverence, *“What wilt Thou do now unto Thy great name?”*

So the Lord watches over His poor, weak, needy, erring people, to shew that He is upright. Whatever *they* are, the Lord is upright. He causes these untoward plants to prosper, and these unpromising plants to flourish, to shew – yes, I am bold to say it – to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, He might manifest, exhibit, preach, and proclaim His own manifold wisdom. Ephesians 3:10. Declaration in God’s own handwriting, *“so the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.”* Might be known by, or rather, *through* the Church on earth, the Church in conflict, in the face of all her enemies, might be known through the Church, the manifold, or the *variegated* wisdom of God” (according to the Greek).

God glories, dear friend, in His own sufficiency: God glories in His own greatness: God glories in the freeness of His grace: He glories in the triumphs of His redemption mercy: it is all for His own name’s sake that He works in our poor hearts as He does, that He guides us as He does with the skillfulness of His hands, and bears with us in all our baseness, corruptions and vileness. Was ever a God like unto our God? Was there ever a salvation comparable unto that salvation which He claims as His own? O that the thought of these things, the confession of these things, the application of these things might move our hearts unto increased and habitual praise, not only, dear hearers, of the lip, but of the life, and in our daily deportment.

And so, this afternoon, fruit is sought for amongst the trees of the Lord’s planting.

Our fruit we take from Him, *“From Me is thy fruit found”* (Hos. 14:8). And yet, He calls it *our* fruit. That is a wonderful Scripture to which in conclusion I must turn, *“Awake O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits. I am come into My garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered My myrrh with My spice: I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey: I have drunk My wine with My milk: eat O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly O Beloved.”* Fellowship between the great Husbandman and His garden, between the Planter and the planted, between Him who begets the fruit in us, and ourselves, the privileged bearers of that fruit, there is communion, and may the Lord give us grace to fulfil His will in all things, for Christ’s sake.

Amen.

(Selected from “The Calvinistic Pulpit,” 1892, Volume 2, pages 107-110.)