

A Second Sermon to Little Children

By Elder Gregg Thompson

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" – 1 John 3:14.

Our text is the words of the beloved disciple, who leaned upon the bosom of Jesus, and listened to the sweet and instructive words that fell from his lips. This was a precious place to lean, and it seems he caught much of the spirit of love, tenderness long forbearance in affliction and persecution that were manifest in his Master.

John felt that he was a little, helpless child, that would be crushed and overpowered by his enemies if not protected by the power of his heavenly Protector; but when leaning on the bosom of Jesus he felt secure. He could feel the heart pulsate that is all love-that loveth at all times-that never changes, but is the same yesterday, to day, and forever. The dearest of earthly friends may leave me, and forget me, but this Friend never will. *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me."* His watchful care over me is such that a hair cannot fall without his notice. He loved me, and died for me, to redeem me from the curse of the law when I was dead in sin and his enemy. When John leaned upon the bosom of Christ, and felt that there was a union between them that could never be dissolved, he could say, with his soul full of joy and confidence, *"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."* The world hated him, persecuted him, and put him to death, and we should not think it strange if the world hate and persecute us. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."* This is a glorious hope, and it is anchored in Christ the rock, both sure and steadfast. His name is a

strong tower, and in it his little ones are safe. Little children, let no man deceive you, and lead you away from this strong and secure tower, and sure anchorage; for if you abide in his word, you shall abide in his love. O that love! unchanging love! that has touched and melted this hard and stony heart of mine, and raised me up from the gloomy shades of death and despair, to be a son and a joint heir with Christ, should inspire my soul with courage, to suffer with him here, and count my sufferings light, and sing with boldness,

**Would not my heart pour forth its blood,
In honor of thy name?
And challenge the cold arm of death
To damp th' immortal flame?**

But when the needs be heaviness comes that we have to pass through that our faith may be tried, as gold in the fire, we lose sight of the sweet smiles that filled us with so much sweet joy, our confidence leaves us, and our songs are turned to mourning, and like the spouse in Solomon's Song, we lay and weep, and feel like one deserted, and left without a friend or protector, upon whose bosom we can lean our head, and then with a sad heart we will say,

**If a child, why am I thus?
Why this cold and lifeless frame?
Hardly sure can they be worse,
Who have never known his name.**

Little children, I love to meet with you, and talk and preach to you, because you know the Father, and the truth, and that no lie is of the truth. We can talk about passing from death unto life, and understand each other.

Your minds have not been darkened by human philosophy, and you have not been led away by that spirit of antichrist which is in the world, and is teaching that the sinner dead in sins is not quickened and made alive; that there is no change wrought in the affections of the Adam sinner by the glorious and gracious work of regeneration; or that this change is effected by agencies, means, and human efforts. I need not speak to you of these things, nor tell you that they all belong to the spirit of antichrist, and are false; for *"ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."* While we talk to you of those that would seduce you, we know *that "the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."*

While I am warning you against these seducing spirits that tell you the dead can hear, repent, believe, and get eternal life, you begin to read the lesson which the anointing ye have received teaches you, and you know their teaching is false; for you know that you were once blind, and could see none of the glories that hang around the cross, and shine in the face of Jesus Christ, as you see them now. But they will say it is because you would not see; but you will tell them that for weeks, or months, and with some of you, perhaps, for years, you were laboring, toiling, and praying, to see how God could be just, and save a poor sinner like you. O how I did labor and strive after that knowledge! I would read my Bible; I would go to preaching; but the cloud grew only darker and darker, and I was taught to feel and know that I could not do the things that I would. But when "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," shined in my heart, my eyes were opened to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. It was not a mere change of conduct, but a change of condition or state, a passing from death to life, from blindness to sight, from ignorance to knowledge, from deafness to hearing; and a new heart, new affections, new appetites were given me, so that I loved the things I once hated, and hated the things I once loved. I was a new creature; old things had passed away, and all things had become

new. You could now say, like the blind man, "I was once blind, but now I see." And by the anointing you have received of him, you will say, "I was dead, but now I live; was lost, but now I am found. Not that I found myself, but was found of him who came to seek and to save that which was lost." The anointing you have received has written in your heart the sentiment of that good old hymn,

**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see.**

**Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed.**

Little ones, your seducers are crafty, and they will tell you that it is not the sinner that is changed, but a new man that eternally existed in heaven, that comes down and gets in this old man, and the war will last as long as they stay together; for they are antagonistic, and can never be reconciled. This brings you into trouble, for if this be true, then I, the sinner, am left out. For that heavenly child had no sins to be forgiven, no evil conscience to be purged, no hard and stony heart to mourn over, and to be melted and softened by God's power and love. It was not dead in sins, and needed not to be quickened by the Spirit. Its election was not that it should be holy and without blame before God in love, for it was eternally so; it was not predestinated unto the adoption of a son, for it was eternally such; it could not be a new creature in Christ, for it eternally existed in him; it could not say, I am no more a foreigner and stranger, for it never was a foreigner and stranger; it could not sing to him that had washed its sins away, for it had no sins to wash away. This doctrine leaves me, the poor, fallen sinner,

without hope. O the gloom that it brings over me! What shall I do? Go to your anointing; it will teach the truth, and tell you, "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" And for your comfort, and to shut the mouths of these seducers, God hath said, "*I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*"

These seducers say that the soul is not a party in this warfare; but it is the territory that each party is contending for. But your unerring monitor will tell you that "*fleshly lusts war against the soul.*" Do these seducers, with their sophistries and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, get you into trouble and confuse your mind? Go back with me to the days you can never forget, and tell me who it was that was burdened with a load of sin, that sought secret places to weep and pray, that lay sleepless at night, and shed tears of grief, feeling that the time of vengeance had come, and that the guilty soul must sink down forever in dark despair and endless ruin. To believe this strange doctrine you have to forget all these things, and drive from your mind the true sentiment of the poet you have so often sung with tears in your eyes, having felt the very things expressed:

**When to the law I trembling fled,
It cursed me, and pronounced me dead-
I fell beneath its weight:
This perfect truth renewed my pain,
' The sinner must be born again:'
My woe I can't relate.**

**Again did Sinai's thunder roll,
And guilt lay heavy on my soul,**

**A vast and ponderous load:
I read and saw this truth most plain,
' The sinner must be born again,'
Or sink In deep despair.**

**But while in anguish thus I lay,
Jesus of Nazareth passed that way-
On me his pity moved:
Although I might be justly slain,
He spoke, and I was born again-
By grace redeemed and loved.**

Dear children, you know that you have felt a change; of this you cannot be mistaken, you cannot have a doubt; then, why be cast down with doubts and fears? O I am so fearful that the change is not the work of the Lord; that it is fleshly, and the effect of education and association. If you will look back to your experience you will get an answer that ought to satisfy your mind, and quiet the fears that so often distress you. Was there not a time with you when the company of Jesus was not desirable, and he was to you as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, no loveliness that would draw your heart away from the world? You were happiest when you could think the least about him; but now he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. His name is the sweetest name that falls upon your ear, in it are all your hopes and comforts; when his sweet face is veiled, and you can not see its smiles, your heart is broken; you feel like one deserted and left without a friend in the world; the day looks dark, and the night can give no sweet rest; earthly friends may then strive to make you happy, but all in vain. Why is it so with you if you do not love? This love began to be felt in your heart when God circumcised it to love him; it is his work, and a sure evidence that you are born of God, and have passed from

death unto life. You may love your husband, or your wife; their presence gives joy, their company is pleasant, but this can not give you the joy your soul now hungers and thirsts for; but one smile from Jesus, one whisper of his love, one taste of his preciousness as your Savior and friend drives all fear and sorrow from your heart.

When but a boy I heard old brother Dewees tell a circumstance which I shall never forget: "My wife," said he, had spent a very gloomy Saturday, and could sleep none all night; she was in Doubting Castle; she thought that she was deceived, and had deceived God's dear children, and had no business to have a name or a place among them. I talked to her, but could give her no comfort. Sunday morning we started to meeting on foot; the country was new, and through forest all the way from my house to the meeting-house. My wife was sad, and most of the time weeping. She soon got some distance behind me, and as I came up to the road into which our path led, I met a brother whose heart was full of grief, and he soon began to tell me what a poor, deceived, deluded creature he was. 'Stop, said I, until my wife comes up, and talk with her.' She soon came up, and her eyes were red with weeping. The brother began to tell her what a poor creature he was, not fit to live, nor to die; for he was deceived, and had deceived the Lord's people. 'I am not fit to live among them, and the thought breaks my heart. O I love them so! I could lay at their feet, and wash them with my tears, if I could only feel that I was one of them, and fit to live with them.' I watched my wife; I saw her countenance change, and soon with a smile she took the brother's hand and said, 'Hush your grief; cast away your doubts and fears; you love God's children; you are born of God; you have passed from death unto life, and are no more a stranger and foreigner.' We walked on to the meeting-house, and I took for my text, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The Lord was with us, and it was a day of feasting to our souls, and as my wife and I went home she was happy, and walked through the woods singing,

**'I love thee, my Savior,
I love thee, my Lord,
I love thy dear people,
thy ways, and thy word.'**

Little children, you know something about this love, and today you can say, with Israel's king, "*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" I had rather suffer afflictions with God's poor and afflicted ones, than to enjoy all the vain earthly comforts a king's palace can give. You are dead to the world, and the world is dead to you; the things that once gave you pleasure now give you pain. You now find joy and rest to your soul in bearing the cross of Christ, and learning of him; you now see ten thousand charms in him, that once your blind eyes could not see. You once esteemed him not, but now he is your beloved, and his presence fills your soul with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory. When he withdraws, your sorrow begins; away from him you have no peace, no resting-place for your soul. The strong and abiding desire of your soul now is, "Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee." Let me live "every day, every hour, and feel thy love and cleansing power." All your comfort of love you find in Jesus, and you love him whenever you see him. You now see his likeness in his little children, and you love them and want to live with them. Now you can sit and hear them talk of the blessed Savior, of his love, and the riches of his grace, and never tire.

O what a change you have felt! It is truly passing from death unto life, from darkness into light, from hatred to loving God and his dear children. Your greatest distress now is because you still find sinful lusts and evil propensities dwelling in the flesh, so that you cannot do the things you would. You desire to do good, to live holy and humbly, to be like a little

child, and like John, to rest in the bosom of Jesus. You now love God, because he first loved you, and took your stony heart away, and gave you a heart of flesh—a heart that could feel and love. And you now love his children, because you see the likeness of the Father in them, and hope that you are kindred, and are all of the same Father. You can have no evidence of kindredship with those that have no change; that say they love sin as well as they ever did; that all that is said about the sinner's being born again, and loving the things he once hated, and hating the things he once loved, is a vain delusion.

Dear little children, you have felt this change; you have been taught it by the anointing you have received, and you are the children of God. Cast away your doubts and fears; you are poor in this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Your loving, faithful Savior says, "*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" Soon you shall sing the conqueror's song in that bright and shining land where sorrow never comes, and all but love is done away. Your little preacher hopes to meet you there, to part no more forever. But while we are here we will meet often and talk about God's power and the glory of his kingdom, and sing,

**Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts In Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.**