

Primitive Preacher by Elder Grigg Thompson
THIRD SERMON TO LITTLE ONES

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would;” [Ga 5:17](#)

LITTLE CHILDREN, I am glad to meet you once more; our little meetings are little love feasts to me, for we all seem to have one spirit, and one train of thought, and draw comfort from the same rock, which is Christ. When children all agree they can sit and talk together, and feel happy. But our comforts, sweet as they are, are mixed with sorrow and pain; tears flow from our eyes, and our heart is pierced with the dagger of an enemy that is with us wherever we go, and we are like the Shulamite, as it were “the company of two armies.” This war is constant; our enemy lives in our flesh, and there can be no peace nor reconciliation between the two parties. The one party is the flesh, or the evil propensities and lusts that dwell in the flesh; and the other party is the soul; ([1Pe 2:11](#)); and the war commences the very day spiritual life is given us, and holy spiritual desires and affections are begotten in the soul. Before that, we were dead in sin, and had no hungering nor thirsting for any thing else. If we heard the Bible read or the gospel preached all was foolishness to us, and we did not believe it; but we thought ourselves alive, and able to do all things necessary to secure eternal salvation, happiness, and holiness. The doctrine of **total depravity** we abhorred, as something too humiliating and debasing to think about. **Totally depraved-dead in sin!** This is too preposterous, for any sane mind to believe. All men have a spark of grace in them, and have the power to so cultivate it, that they can come to Christ, believe on him, and be saved. All that is wanting is for us to make the start, and persevere to the end.

The men that taught us that the written word or the preached gospel is the means of eternal life, or of quickening and regenerating the sinner, and that all we had to do was to hear the gospel, believe it, repent of our sins, and obey it, and the blessing would be secured, our sins pardoned, and we made the heirs of heaven and eternal glory, were the preachers for us, for they gave us a chance to be saved, if we would only start in the work in good earnest; for we had the power of ourselves to do all this, if we would only make the effort. This does not rob us of our pride and self-esteem; it does not make us totally vile and dead in sin, nor lay us helpless and prostrate in the dust at the feet of sovereign mercy. He that talked the most about the means of grace, and the power of the gospel to make Christians of men and women; that it offered salvation to all upon terms and conditions; that all had the power to comply,

and perform, and so secure the blessing, taught a consistent means system, and it fed our natural minds, for we could understand it, and it strengthened our confidence in our fleshly, natural abilities to save ourselves, whenever we made the resolve, and went to work. This would quiet our conscience, and make us feel easy; for we had time enough yet, and so we attended to it before we died all would be right, and this we intended to do when we had taken our fill of sin and the vanities and pleasures of life. Sometimes, when death would visit our family, and take our friends or loved ones, we would resolve to begin the work very soon; but the alarm would pass off, and we could afford to put it off, for the terms were easy, and we could soon do all that was required, and we did not feel like giving up the sinful pleasures we loved so well. Thus we lived, and these conditional means preachers strengthened us in our self-confidence and ability to do the work, and save ourselves whenever we got ready. A good resolution, and a promise that we would set about the work before long would quiet the conscience, and we could go into sin with all the delight we ever did. In this I have drawn no fancy sketch; you, little children, have experienced it all, and can now look back to the time when it was your delight to walk according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and if any thing took place to alarm you, a promise would be made that would quiet your fears; for it was all in your own hands, and you could close in with the terms at your pleasure.

But there was a time that you will never forget, when, from some cause, you felt as never before, heard as never before, and saw as never before. Your soul was filled with fear; you trembled under a sense of guilt and condemnation; you felt that death was near, and something had to be done, or you were lost forever. And then you resolved to go to work without delay. I will go and pray, for the preachers have told me that prayer is one of the terms upon which eternal life and salvation are offered. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Trusting in the virtue of my prayer, I fell upon my knees; but O my heart! I saw it as I never saw it before—deceitful, evil, wicked, corrupt above all things—from it had preceded all my wicked thoughts, and it had prompted all my wicked actions. I now could see sin in all its exceeding sinfulness, and that I was a vile sinner, and that God was of too pure eyes to look upon such a vile wretch as me, or hear a prayer from such a vile, deceitful heart as mine. Thus, for weeks, and months, and some of us for years, have gone weeping and mourning over our sad condition; and sometimes the burden would be so great, and the distress of soul so severe, we felt like we could not endure it much longer. Our favorite preachers, who had in former days eased our fears, and gave us courage and confidence with their means, instrumentality and

work system, would now visit us; but 0 their gospel would fill us with utter despair, for in the light of a new and spiritual life we saw the heinous nature of sin, and the depth of our depravity and inbred corruption, so that we could join with the poet and say,

If I read, or sing, or pray,
Sin is mixed with all I do.

The words of the Savior would come: “Seek, and ye shall find;” and we would again hunt some secret place, fall prostrate upon the earth, pray, weep, and mourn, but all in vain; our case was growing more and more hopeless in our view every day. What could the Savior mean? We have prayed and sought him with a broken heart and tears of penitence, but have not found him. We go to the Bible and read the words of the Savior, to see what the matter is, and wherein we have failed; we read, and find that he was talking to his disciples, his dear little flock, who were following him, and suffering with him; and not to such a poor reprobate, hard-hearted, guilty sinner, as we felt ourselves to be. 0 what despair filled our mind, when we found our preachers had perverted the words of the Savior, and encouraged us to trust in our prayers, that fell from polluted lips, and came from a deceitful, wicked, corrupt heart. We knew not what to do, or where to go; but we could not rest, or throw our burden off. Sometimes we thought: There is no mercy for me; my day of grace is past; my condemnation is sealed; there is no use to try any more; I will cast it off, and enjoy the world while I live in it. But this was a failure; the burden was there, the heart was broken, and we could find nothing to give us ease. The world was dead to us; it had no pleasures for us any longer; its ways were now hateful to us, as the ways of death.

Surely there is no condition a poor soul was ever in that is more unbearably miserable, than to feel that he is cast off from God, from heaven, and all good people, and is killed to sin, and all the pleasures of the wicked. In this condition life is a dark, dreary, comfortless state; and there is no hope of a better state beyond this life. Little children, what I say is no fancy sketch with you; that dark and gloomy road you have traveled, without hope, and without God. Your blind guides directed you to Sinai and its conditional covenant; and you found that you had broken its conditions, had fallen under its curse, and that it had no life to give, no word of forgiveness to speak, no righteousness to impart, and no power to justify the guilty sinner. The words it spoke were so terrible, and were death to all your hopes; and beneath its curse you lay in helpless despair, convinced that no conditional system could meet your helpless, guilty state, nor give you hope and comfort. The way that the conditional preachers said is the way to life, you found to be the way unto

death. You could now see that **the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good:** but **I am carnal-sold under sin.** The holy law can never give life to the condemned criminal, nor justify the guilty sinner. Your poor soul was now overwhelmed in despair; for you could see no way for the law to be honored, and the lawful captive delivered. The just sentence of condemnation is passed, and before it's bar the criminal stands justly condemned, with no offered pardon, nor way of deliverance provided. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin;" ([Ro 3:20](#)). You now realized your condition before the law, and these words of Paul seemed to seal your fate forever: "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" [Ga 3:10](#). You had followed the directions of your blind guides, and had taken your money and good works, and gone to Sinai with them, but it was too late; the sentence was passed, the unconditional decree had gone forth: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." You saw that by the works of the law no flesh could be justified, and there was no hope for you.

There was a poor man in Georgia, who in a quarrel had killed his neighbor. He was tried, and condemned to be hung. There was great sympathy for him in the community; a petition for his reprieve was circulated; the judge who passed the sentence of death upon him signed it, also the prosecutor, and the jurors who had found the verdict of "guilty" against him. The day of execution came, but no pardon had yet come; he was taken from the prison to the scaffold where he was to be hung. His wife and two little children followed, crying like their hearts were broken, and seated themselves by him on the scaffold. A short sermon was delivered and prayer made, and the sheriff ordered all off the scaffold, and when the poor, condemned criminal bade his wife and little ones farewell, he cried, "Gone, gone, gone!" and fell, fainting, on the bosom of his wife. The scene was heart-rending, weeping and crying could be heard all over the vast crowd of people; but the sheriff, pale as death, proceeded to execute the sentence of the law. He raised the criminal from the bosom of his wife, ordered her off the scaffold, put the blindfold over his eyes, placed the rope that was around his neck over the pivot where he was to hang, and with a hatchet in his hand, he stepped to cut the rope that held up the trap upon which the criminal stood trembling like a leaf; but as he raised the hatchet to strike the fatal blow, a voice was heard, crying, "Hold, hold, hold!" All eyes were turned; a man was approaching as fast as he could with a paper

in his hand. It was given to the sheriff, and was a reprieve, signed by the governor of the State. The sheriff loosed the prisoner, took the blind from his eyes, and said to him, "You are pardoned." The wife had mounted the scaffold, the man saw her and approached her, crying, "Saved, saved, saved!" and fell, fainting, in her arms. The scene was solemn beyond description; screams and cries could be heard in every direction.

Little ones, you came to the law; your condition was like that poor man's; every hope died within you, and helpless, you fell beneath the curse, and cried, "Gone, gone, gone!" It was death, and nothing but death, that you heard from the law.

But when the glittering sword of justice was raised, ready to pierce you, the thunderings of Sinai ceased, you heard the voice of terrible words no more, the veil was taken from your eyes, and instead of Sinai's burning summit, Mount Calvary and the cross of Christ, his bleeding body, the cleansing blood of the New Testament were before your eyes, and the words of pardon fell from the lips of him that hung upon the cross, saying, "It is finished." The law with all its curses end in him; its conditions are fulfilled; your debt is paid; you are freed from the prison, and from the law; and your sins are all forgiven. You stood wondering what this meant, when, with a smiling face and extended arms, he said, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and iniquities, I will remember no more." Then you fell helpless in the arms of Jesus; your fears were gone; a peace of soul was felt which you had never felt before. Then you could see the weakness and imperfection of the conditional system, that it was the law of sin and death, and all its works, offerings, and bloody sacrifices could not put away sin, cleanse the guilty conscience, nor justify the transgressor. But when the veil was taken from your eyes, and you saw Jesus, the sin-atoning Lamb, and heard him speak the word of pardon, your soul was filled with joy, and peace, and love, and you could say,

Come, brethren, help me sing his praise;

Oh, praise the name of Jesus

Come, sisters, all your voices raise;

Oh, bless the name of Jesus!

His name dispels my guilt and fears

No other name but Jesus;

Oh, how my soul delights to hear

The precious name of Jesus!

Then you felt that your sorrows were all over, that God had comforted you, and had become your salvation. The way of salvation through Jesus now

looked so full and complete, so free and clear, you wondered that you had not seen it before; and you felt that you could tell it to every one, and they would see it as you did. So felt your little preacher, when that precious Jesus was revealed to him, “the way, the truth, and the life.” He was then about fifteen years old, and in the ecstasy of his feelings he thought of his sisters, and thought he could tell them of that precious Jesus, and make them see him and love him too, and that they would all be happy together. He went into the house where they were, and began to preach to them the riches and fullness of Jesus, the Savior of lost and justly condemned sinners; they became alarmed, and, crying, ran into another room, and said to my mother, “Brother is in the other room, raving crazy.” My mother came to me, and said, “Son, what is the matter?” My heart was full of love, my cup was running over with joy, and I said, “O mother! Jesus has been good to me, and forgiven all my sins. O help me praise him.” Mother embraced me in her arms, and as her warm tears fell upon my face, she shouted, “Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus! O he was precious to me when I was but a little girl! and he has now been precious to my dear child, and has taken his hard and stony heart away, and given him a heart to love his dear Savior.” O, little children, that was a happy moment with your little preacher. That mother is now! in heaven, where she can look upon her precious Jesus without a veil between; and I hope, through the grace of the blessed Jesus, soon to be with her and bask in the sunshine of that; glory forever and ever. And there I hope to; meet these little ones that I am talking to now. You are upon the sea, amidst the storms and tempests of this life, but they can not drown you; but the last billow that shall come will cast you upon the bright and shining shore, where sorrow can never come, where parting will be no more; fears, temptations, and trials will all be over, and God and the Lamb shall be the light of the place.

The saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Savior and brethren transported to greet;
While anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul.

This hope is our anchor while tossed by the storms and billows of life, and it is a good hope through grace, that we cannot give up, while in trials and afflictions; we would sink in despair without it. If this hope looked only to this life, and gave no assurance of a better one, we, of all men, would be most miserable; but this glorious hope lifts us up to things above, and gives us courage to bear the trials of time.

When we first received this blessed hope, and our hearts were full of faith and love, like little children, we thought our troubles were over and that we had

nothing before us but a smooth sea of peace, joy, and love. I was baptized the second Sunday in May, 1826, with twelve others; and for about two weeks my spiritual sky was clear; not a cloud appeared to cast a shadow over my mind. About this time the brethren and sisters paid my father what they called a pastoral visit; bringing their presents to help him feed and clothe his family, and spending the day in talking about the Savior, and singing his praise. On this occasion many of the young converts were in the company, and one, who was baptized the same day that I was, like me, had been sailing on a smooth sea. In the company was an old Sister Lamb, a mother in Israel, and a great talker. She had been long in the warfare, had passed through many trials and severe battles, and she loved to talk them over, and could tell almost every trial and dark place the Christian would get into. I, but a boy, sat silently, and attentively listened to their conversation; and as they would talk of their trials, doubts, and fears, and shed tears, I would wonder why they felt thus; for I thought if they would look at their experience and hope, they would drive all fears and doubts away. In the evening they all went home, and I walked home with the young sister who was baptized the day I was. We had been raised children together, and were about the same age. As we walked along we were talking about the conversation of the day, and of the troubles and sorrows, doubts and fears, these old Christians seemed to have, and we wondered why they did not look back to their experience and hope, which would certainly drive all their doubts and fears away. Just before we parted I said to her, "I want to make a bargain with you." "Well, what is it?" said she "If you get into Doubting Castle, and lose all your comforts and joys, you shall come and tell me; and if I get there I will come and tell you." She agreed to it, and we parted. As I walked home alone I was thinking over the conversation of the day, and the thought struck me: These are all Christians; I have no doubt of it, and especially old Sister Lamb; if you were a Christian you would have the same trials, doubts, and fears that they do; this should satisfy you that you are no Christian, that all with you is a mistake, and you are deceived yourself, and have deceived the church. O what a sad boy I was! I went home, but that was a sleepless night. I did not think I was doubting, for I thought it was a settled, plain case that I was no Christian, and was not traveling the road that Christians travel. The next day, according to my promise, I went to see my sister, and tell her my troubles. I found her in her room; her eyes were red with weeping. We both had suffered about the same way through the night, and when we parted we were both weeping in the presence of her mother, who had heard the most of our conversation, and she said to us, "O my" children, God is teaching you both a good lesson; but you will come out of it like gold that is tried in the fire. I left with a sad heart, but could not comprehend the

meaning of her words. Here commenced the warfare with me; and it is not yet ended; and I am sure you are all in the warfare, and love to sit and hear it talked about the balance of this little sermon.

When deliverance comes to the despairing soul, and it is freed from that old conditional system, called gospel by Judaizers and false teachers, and the unconditional promises of the new covenant, the gospel comes with its shalls and wills, and its words of mercy, grace, and pardon to the justly condemned soul, the joy is so great and every thing looks so clear, full, and free, and fully meets all the wants and needs of the poor, guilty, helpless debtor, who had nothing in his hand to bring. He thinks his trials are all ended; the world is under his feet; his fleshly desires and lusts are all subdued; and that his life will now be peace and uninterrupted joy. You would then sing, with a soul full of heavenly ecstasy,

On the wings of his love
I am carried above
All sin, and temptation, and pain;
I cannot believe
that I ever shall grieve,
That I ever shall suffer again.

But it was not long until you felt something like a thorn piercing you, and giving you pain; you turned your eyes within, and began to examine yourself to find what was the matter, and you soon saw that your old enemy still lived in your flesh; that carnal lusts and propensities were still there; they began to pierce and persecute you. Something would whisper in your ears, "Examine yourself, look into your heart, and you will find sin and evil are there yet." "You look down into yourself, and begin to dig and hunt there for some evidences of your Christianity; but the more you hunt, and the deeper you dig, the darker the scene gets; you can find nothing good in the flesh, nothing to build a hope upon. Something within whispers, "You are a poor, deceived mortal; all your joys were visionary, and a delusion; for if you were a child of God all of these vile and sinful propensities would be gone, for he that is born of God sinneth not." Gloom comes over your mind; fears make you tremble; you try to look back to the time when your load of sin and guilt was removed from your despairing heart, but darkness is there, and you wonder at yourself that you should have had such joy that now seems all a delusion-nothing but a vain fancy. "If I could get my old trouble back I would have some hope; for I could then weep over my sins; but now all feeling seems to be gone; I can not shed a tear, and if I try to pray, vain and foolish thoughts come into my mind which make me tremble and leave the place with a sad heart, feeling that I am

not a child of God. I am deceived, and have deceived God's dear children." You will now sing, and feel the truth of the words in your soul,

I am a stranger here below,
And what I am 'tis hard to know;
I am so vile, so prone to sin,
I fear that I'm not born again.

Little children, you are now in the war; the fight has begun, which will last as long as you live in the flesh. You now find a law in your members warring against the law of your mind, and bringing you into captivity to the law of sin, so that you cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You are now tempted and tossed upon angry billows; your soul is troubled and filled with doubts and fears; the load seems more than you can bear. "O I am too vile to look up and call God my father and Jesus my brother."

It is in these temptations, trials, and afflictions you learn to have fellowship for the sufferings of Christ. Your Savior was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief; he was tempted in all points like as you are, and he has traveled this dark and gloomy road before you.

Little children, it is through seas of tribulation you have to make your pilgrimage here; for **it is given you not only to believe on m, but also to suffer for his sake**. It is through great tribulation that the ransomed host will reach the shining shore of blessed reality, in robes of spotless white, made white in the blood of the Lamb, and with immortal voices sing, -

Glory be to Christ, the Savior,
Who hath bought us with his blood;
Glory to the blessed Spirit,
Glory to the Mighty God.

These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. When these bodies, that are sown mortal and material, shall be raised immortal and spiritual, and fashioned like the glorious body of our blessed Jesus, we will be satisfied, and live in eternal peace. The body of the sins of the flesh, the old man which is corrupt according to the sinful lusts, will be put off and left behind, so that he can never trouble us any more.

It is our duty now to put him off, to crucify him and put him to death if possible; for he lives in our flesh, and is the enemy of our souls. It is not that we are to commit suicide, and literally kill our bodies, but we are to crucify

these evil lusts and propensities, which war against the soul. When our bodies are resurrected immortal and spiritual, and made like the glorious body of Christ, there will be no old man; the immortal soul will enter the body, now made immortal, and it will be the one new man in heaven, and will reign with Christ forever. Some say that the old man is literally our body of flesh; but if that be true, our bodies will never be resurrected, for corruption cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The Christian's hope would then be delusive, for we hope and wait for **“the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”** Again, some say that when Christ died, all the elect or church died in him; when he was buried, they were buried in him; when he was raised from the dead, they all were resurrected with him. If this be true our hopes are all vain and a delusion, for the resurrection is already past, and Paul was mistaken and made a gross blunder, for he says, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming;” ([1Co 15:20-23](#)). Thus, in words as plain as language can speak, he teaches that the resurrection of Christ's people was not at his resurrection, but will be at his coming.

The child of God has enemies without and within; false teachers and seducers will try to destroy his hope of a resurrection of his body, by telling him that the church, or all his elect people were raised when Christ was raised, and that the resurrection is past. “Nevertheless,” says Paul, “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” His internal foes will try to persuade him that he is not a child, that he is too simple and vile. You, dear little ones, to whom I am talking, know all these things; the anointing you have received hath taught you all things, not only in reference to yourselves and your sinful, polluted nature, but the way of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Your warfare will soon be ended, and you made more than conquerors through him that has loved you. O, you have a Friend that loveth at all times, who will never forsake you but will keep you by his almighty power. His word is true, and he says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” You need not fear, the victory shall be yours; for, “In the Lord, Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Amen.