

HENRIC SCHARTAU

AND

THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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Second Prayer Sunday, 1799

Introduction.

*Up, get you out of this place;
For the Lord will destroy the city.*

It was with fear and amazement that Lot brought this message and warning to his sons-in-law. We read the narrative in Gen. 19. 1-14.

It is not my purpose to appear as a prophet predicting destruction on this place, but the whole condition of an unconverted man is like that of a city or a place where he rests in security, but whence he must depart. Therefore, O sinner, cast your sins away, lest for their sake you be cast away from God's presence. Forsake sin, lest you be eternally forsaken by God. Up, get you out of this place! Sin belongs to hell. It comes from there and it tends thither. Every one who clings to his sins in life and to whom sins adhere in death must follow them whither they tend, to the abode of the devil, who is the author of sin. If you are his subject, you must at last abide with your master. Up, get you out of this place! Nor imagine that this is an easy matter. The departure out of Sodom, though only an earthly journey, demanded some preparation, for which a certain brief time was allowed. Your whole life is granted for such a purpose. Use it well and prepare yourself

for the great final journey. Think not that grace is obtained with a mere sigh, nor imagine that you shall be converted by uttering a few words. Do not venture to the brink of eternity, for you may soon be precipitated into its bottomless depths. Let not the devil edge you along to the slippery ice of sickness, for the storms of despair may bring you out on the boundless regions of eternity, where you may not be able to stop in your flight. Beware, lest perchance, after repeated delays and postponements in the matter of your soul's salvation, the day when you would repent find you in the depths of eternal perdition. Up, get you out of this place!

TEXTS.

The night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Rom. 13. 12.

Therefore I now bow the knees of my heart and ask Thee, O Lord, for pardon. Alas, O Lord, I have sinned, I have sinned, and I know my transgressions. Manasseh, v. 11.

Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and that say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Is. 29. 15.

Proposition.

THE GRACE OF GOD AS A REFUGE FOR AN AWAKENED SINNER.

1. Whence a sinner must flee to find refuge with God. Rom. 13. 12.
2. Whither an awakened sinner must flee. Manasseh 11.
3. What he must aspire to, if he shall retain his refuge with God and His grace. Is. 29. 15.

First Part.

It is not necessary to remind an intelligent audience that the apostle does not here mean a natural night and day; but it may be in place to say, for the enlightenment of the simple-hearted, that the apostle speaks of the night of ignorance, blindness, and carelessness in the matters pertaining to eternity, a night which covered the whole earth before the time of Christ and His apostles. It was the night of paganism. The condition then prevailing in the world was like that of a natural night. A light may be lit in a room, and there one can see, but outside in space one cannot see anything, for darkness prevails out there. The small country inhabited by Israel was in comparison with the rest of the world like a small cottage on a vast plain. Here a light was burning, for Israel was "intrusted with the oracles of God." Elsewhere there prevailed the darkness of idolatry. Here and there among the Jews appeared a true Israelite with concern for another Canaan than that in which he lived. But elsewhere throughout the world, a brutish carelessness expressed itself in this fashion, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we must die." In Israel some were awake, but in the heathen world sleep was everywhere prevalent.

With the advent of day that vast field became quite as well lit up as the little room where the candle previously burned. When Jesus came and sent His apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom and the way thither, the heathens learnt to know the way quite as well as the Jews. They needed not, like the Ethiopian eunuch, to make extensive journeys to the land of Israel for enlightenment, for the light was brought to them and set

upon its own candlestick. Night was far spent and day was at hand. Indeed, the heathens showed a rather greater earnestness and concernment for the salvation of their souls than the people of Israel itself.

What has here been said concerning the heathen world can also be said concerning every man who is indifferent with reference to his soul. There is night, and at night one can not see, even though he has perfect eyes, for darkness prevents their right use. If a traveler then asks his companion, if they are in the right way, the latter must admit that he does not know with certainty. A similar admission would be made by spiritually blind sinners, if they spoke sincerely. They may trouble themselves greatly to convince others of their assurance that they are the children of God; but this very troublesome effort shows that they are laboring against a secret voice which dictates the opposite. Their eagerness to defend themselves and to give reason for their pretended hope shows that the hope is not very secure, but that they have reason to fear that some one may rob them of it. Indeed, my friend, assurance of salvation comes not thus lightly into the heart. It comes from God, and if it is obtained, it is not easily removed. No man can give it, nor can any man take it away. Indifferent sinners can not with certainty know where they are, nor where they are to abide; for in their hearts there is night. They are asleep and lie as unconcerned as those who are asleep, quite unafraid, quite unable to save themselves, even from the most obvious danger.

It is from such slumber that a sinner must be awakened, but it cannot be done until God quickens him. The sinner is even more unable than one physically

sleeping to awake himself. Jesus is like a good friend, who notices that fire has broken out in the house of his friend, while all there are asleep. He hastens thither and raps at the door. He calls to the people to awake and save themselves. Thus Jesus represents Himself in Rev. 3. 20. It now happens as when one naturally sleeping awakes. While half awake he hears the rapping and the cry. Finally he awakes, opens his eyes, sees his danger, leaps up, and endeavors to save himself. In like manner an awakening sinner perceives something unusual when hearing the Word of God, becomes sorrowful and affrighted, convinced of his spiritual danger, and impelled to seek after salvation. When a soul is thus awakened and is endeavoring to flee from the wrath of God, it is necessary that the following instruction be given to him in order that he may know what it is that he must flee from, if he is to find refuge in the grace of God.

This instruction is given by the apostle in analogy with the departure of night and the advent of day, "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." The works of darkness are intentional sins. Such sins are called "works of darkness," for they are preferably done in darkness. The sinner is bent on sinning, though he may be ashamed of the abominable appearance of his sin, and so he sins in secret. He chooses the darkness of the night or, at any rate, wishes to have his sins quite as forgotten as if they were covered with the darkness of night. Intentional sins are also called "works of darkness," because it is the Prince of Darkness who tempts man to sin, fortifies him in sin, and induces him to re-

main in sin. Hence, such sins are also, in John's first epistle, called the works of the devil, "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." An intentional sinner sins, not by reason of ignorance or imprudence, but, even as the devil, with malicious deliberation. Intentional sins are also called "the works of the flesh." It is from all such sins that an awakened sinner must flee. It is such sins that he must "cast off."

You tell me that you cannot understand this. "I have often debated with myself," you say, "how I might bring about such a change in my life, but, in the midst of such self-deliberation, I have finally stopped in the same mind as before." I reply, do you not know whence this comes? You have the one hand full of sin and the other full of the world; you should cast them away with both hands, but, before you do this, you look at the one and behold the other, and you thus become loath to part with these friends of yours. You are doing like Eve, looking at the forbidden fruit and becoming infatuated with it. While thus deliberating with yourself, you become reversed in mind. Instead of casting away sin and the world, you clasp them to your heart. No, you must act rapidly; if you are to cast them away, it will not do to shove them away slowly; you must *cast off* the works of darkness, or, as Jesus expresses it, *cut off* the aggravating foot or hand, pluck out the enticing eye.

Someone again remarks, "I have tried to cast them off, but I have not been able to do it. I have determined never to do thus and thus again, but still I have sinned again. Angered with myself, I have resolutely

promised that it should never happen again, but I have nevertheless again fallen into sin." I reply, Of course, you have fallen. You have tried to cast off the works of darkness, but you have not put on the armour of light. This must follow in life, as it follows in the words of the apostle. The devil will not easily let go of his captive. You cannot unarmed escape from his superior power. When he notices that you are becoming concerned about your salvation, he acts like a spider when a fly tries to get loose from his web. As the spider winds new cords about the wretched little fly, so the devil arranges new entertainments or devices to hold captive, even more securely, the soul that has begun to seek for rescue. So then, you need weapons, as the apostle has said, weapons of light against the Prince of Darkness. Of course, we are not here speaking of natural light. "The armour of light" signifies the Word of God, which in the Scriptures is called a light and also a weapon.

"Yes," you now rejoin, "but I have the Word of God, and I read it now and then, and still no change has taken place in me." I reply, This is due to the fact that, as you say, you use the Word "now and then." If a warrior were thus to leave his weapons hanging on the wall, his enemies might well surprise him and slay him, before he could get his musket and defend himself. He must in time of war carry his weapons with him; they must be, as it were, a part of his dress and be ever at hand for ready use. This is Paul's teaching when he says, "Put on the armour of light." If you leave your Bible lying on the shelf, the tempter may overtake you before you can look up your Bible and

find out what to do in your present exigency. You must see to it that the Word of God is as near to you as your very clothing, that it may enter into your mind with knowledge and into your heart with desire. You must see to it that the Word of God be planted into your life, and that you may be clothed with this weapon of light. Then you will be enabled to flee from the former manner of sinful life and to cast off the works of darkness.

Second Part.

We here ask whither an awakened sinner shall flee, and I reply, He must flee to the grace of God. We first note what it is that impels him to take refuge in the grace of God. It is a thorough knowledge of sin and its wretchedness. Manasseh, whose words constitute our second text, was a king of Judah. He had been very much infatuated with the errors of idolatry and had committed many sins. He had even been cruel to those who were not like-minded with him. God chastised and punished him with defeat at the hands of a foreign king. In his captivity Manasseh began to think, and it was probably now that he offered the prayer of which our text is a part. He describes his state of mind, saying, "I know my transgressions." Behold, O sinner! When a man arrives at true knowledge of his sins, he does not consider them merely as shortcomings and faults, but as awful transgressions. Then you realize that you have transgressed all the commandments of God, and that even the sins which are deemed negligible by the world are abominable before God. In this way you learn to understand that you have sinned against all the commandments, but that

the source of your unhappiness lies even deeper, not in your manner of living, but in your heart, not in your acts, but in your person. Manasseh expresses this by repeating his confession, pointing out his own person. "I have sinned, I have sinned." Thus you discover the sinful depravity of your heart, O sinner, and get a clear conception of your corrupted nature. There is the root which bears the fruit of evil. There is the well-spring of corruption. When you realize this, you look in vain for refuge. Anguish and weeping then prove inefficient to blot out such an immense indebtedness, and you find it utterly impossible to expect any real improvement by the mere exertions of a depraved soul. There is no other refuge left for you than the grace of God, and you look in vain for another. Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ! He has opened "a new and living way." With the suffering in His flesh, He wrought atonement for the wrath of God, and opened a way to the grace of God. By means of what He did while walking here in the garb of human flesh and blood, Jesus purchased an eternal righteousness, which suffices throughout all time even for you.

This refuge in the grace of God is taken with prayer. "Therefore I bow the knees of my heart and ask Thee, O Lord, for pardon." This is not a thoughtless and careless repetition of a few prayers, for when Manasseh speaks of bowing the knees of his heart, he means what Jesus expresses by saying that we should "pray in spirit and in truth." An awakened sinner asks for the grace which Jesus purchased with His atonement and righteousness. He has no other plea to offer than the merits of Jesus, no other basis for his hope to be heard than

God's promise to grant this grace to everyone who desires to accept it for nothing, as the grace of Jesus Christ, for His sake and on His account.

An awakened sinner comes with a sincere confession of his sins and seeks refuge in the grace of God. Manasseh said, "Alas, O Lord, I have sinned." Such a confession is not needed for the Lord's sake. He knows, far better than you do, your sinful ways; it is He who has shown them to you. The confession is needed for your own sake, that you may the better learn to know how loathsome your sins are, and that your heart may be opened before God to make your confession with sincerity and confidence. When David thus sought refuge in the grace of God, he tells us that he approached the mercy seat and found what he sought, for God found room in the heart thus opened, and His Spirit was enabled to grant a true faith, bringing with it the forgiveness of sins.

Third Part.

When an awakened sinner has found refuge in the grace of God, it nevertheless becomes necessary for him to flee from everything which would deprive him of the grace he has found. I shall therefore now proceed to show that an awakened sinner must flee from sin, after he has found refuge in the grace of God.

A person just converted meets his greatest dangers among his former associates, and therefore he must leave them and especially flee from those who do not have any regard for the grace of God, Their mockery might soon make the new convert ashamed of Jesus and His Word and thus make him again unworthy of the grace which he has just received. Their threats might

make him afraid and lead him like Peter to deny his Lord. Their persuasive speech might deceive an easily perverted heart to follow them back to the former ways. Their examples might quicken passions so recently subdued and again bring the saved soul into the thralldom of sin. Their conversation might suffocate the feeble spirit and gradually extinguish its flame. Therefore it is entirely necessary for a new convert to flee from the evil associations of those who are not converted nor wish to be. The Scriptures also counsel and admonish us to avoid such companionship, saying, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners." This was God's intent when He forbade the Jews' yoking together a horse and an ox, not that the yoking together of animals of different species was wrong in itself, but it had a deep significance, namely that which Paul expresses when he says, "Be not unequally yoked with the unbelievers." It is quite sufficient that we cannot entirely avoid their company, since we cannot escape from this world. It is enough that we are constrained to deal with them in matters pertaining to this present life. It is enough that our Christian sense of duty now and then demands that we must endure those who are evil, and that our common charity occasionally makes such associations necessary. We should all the more take care to avoid unnecessary associations and undue intimacy with those of a carnal and worldly mind.

"But," you say, "how shall I be able to know who they are, in order that I may beware of them?" I reply, This is precisely what I propose to show in the light of our text. It mentions three characteristics of those

from whom a person must flee after he has taken refuge in the grace of God. "Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah" etc.

First, they seek to hide their counsel. When you meet a person who shows a wrong purpose but immediately, when caught, turns about, saying, "Oh, no, that was not my intention. I did not mean to say that, but this is what I meant"; when you find people who do not shoot whither they aim, then you must beware lest you be entangled, like Eve, by the craftiness of the serpent.

Secondly, there are those who are somewhat more simple-minded. "Whose works are in the dark." This is another characteristic of those from whom a converted person must flee. Converted people are like the Roman of old who built his house with windows on all sides, so that everybody could see what he was about. Jesus characterizes a converted man when He says, "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God." A converted person might indeed permit another converted person to see everything he does, yes even open his heart to be read like a book. "But every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd." If you notice someone who is very much inclined to deny what he does and to obliterate the marks of his footsteps along the ways that he has walked, continually anxious that no one shall know what he is about, such an one is certainly a child of deception. He assuredly has something which he needs to conceal since he thus hides himself.

With this extreme cunning, with all these devices, the children of this world imagine that much is being accomplished, to the extent that it has become a maxim with them, that they say, "Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" This is a third characteristic of the unconverted. They will not listen to the idea that any one might be able to understand their inner condition. They become intolerant, if any one intimates that he has the slightest conception of this. They immediately protest against judgments and condemnations, and it is a real doctrine in the system of the unconverted that, in as much as one cannot search a man's heart, no one can make conclusions with reference to the condition of another's soul. When you find people who lose their peace as soon as a spiritual conversation is directed their way, you may indeed flee, and be glad, if you can make your escape and save yourself, without stopping to deliberate how you might do something for their persuasion.

Application.

Let me now, in conclusion, admonish you with the words recorded in Eph. 5. 14. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." If you hear the word of the Lord more clearly now than otherwise, then awake and arise, lest you awake with the rich man in the flames of hell. If you awake and are enabled to realize the danger of your soul, beware, lest you merely awake and remain lying there; awake rightly and sin not, awake and flee from your former sinful life, and see that you cast away the works of darkness, to the end that Christ may enlighten you.

By walking in the light of grace you shall be enlightened. If you diligently seek for refuge, you shall find it in the grace which your Saviour has procured. If you are laden with sins, if you are laboring against the assaults of temptations, then your Saviour offers you a refuge, saying "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And after you have found this refuge, He assures you that you shall not be excluded therefrom, for whosoever comes to Him shall in no wise be cast out. Amen.