

God

A Sermon By
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"The fool hath said in his hearts there is no God"
Psalm xiv. 1.

I have taken, or rather God has given me, for my text tonight a very short one. I do not think you ever heard a sermon from a shorter text. I will not tell you where to find the text. It occurs several hundred times in the Bible. Indeed, open your Bible at random almost anywhere and you will find my text somewhere on the page. It consists of but one word; but it would take all eternity to exhaust its meaning, and then it will not be exhausted. It is "God" - a word the height and depth and length and breadth of whose meaning no philosopher has ever fully apprehended.

I. GOD Is

The first thing the Bible teaches us about God is that God is. "God is"-two short words. Tremendous significance! "God is." If that simple truth gets hold of your mind and heart it will move and mold your entire life. It will determine your science, it will determine your philosophy, it will determine your daily life, it will determine your eternity. "God is." The psalmist tells us in Psalm xiv.-"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Please note where he says it - "in his heart." That is, he says there is no God simply because he does not wish to believe that there is a God. Now, there is a God, and a man that denies a fact simply because he does not wish to believe it is a fool.

There is abundant proof of the existence of God, so abundant that no man can sit down and consider the proof thoroughly and candidly without acknowledging the existence of God. Nature proves the existence of God. All through Nature there are marks of creative intelligence. Everywhere in Nature you find order, symmetry, law. You can study Nature in the minute, or you can study Nature in the vast, it makes no difference; everywhere you find the marks of intelligence and creative design. You may take your microscope and turn it down upon the minutest forms of life; everywhere there is adaptation to end, to purpose, to design. The man of science will tell you that in the minutest structure discernible by the most powerful microscope he finds perfect beauty, and most perfect adaptation of means to end. Or take your telescope and turn it towards the vaster Nature. Everywhere you see order, symmetry, law, intelligence, design, all proving an intelligent Creator of the material universe in which we live. Suppose I show you my watch, and ask, "Do you believe it had a maker?" you would say, "Certainly." "But why? Did you see it made?" "No." "Did you ever

see a watch made?" "No!" "Why, then, do you believe it had a maker?" "Because everything about it indicates an intelligent maker- hands, figures upon the face, case, winding apparatus, everything about the watch proclaims that it had an intelligent maker. Suppose I replied, "You are mistaken; the watch had no intelligent maker; the watch came to be by accident; by a fortuitous concurrence of atoms dancing around through endless ages, until at last, in the age in which you find it, they danced into the present form; thus the watch came to be." Your remark would be, "That man may think he is highly educated, but he talks like a fool;" and you would be right. Yet there are no such marks of intelligent design in that watch as in this material universe. One very small part of Nature, your own eye, is a far more wonderful structure than any watch. But if some man should stand up and say that this wonderful universe in which we live came into being by a fortuitous concurrence of atoms which danced around through the endless ages until they danced into their present form any would call him a philosopher. In the ordinary affairs of life he would be called a foolosopher.

But, Some one may say, "The doctrine of evolution does away with the whole force of the argument from design." Not at all. I formerly believed that the doctrine of evolution was true, but

gave up the belief, not from theological but from scientific reasons, because it was absolutely unproven; there is not a single proof of the hypothesis of evolution. People talk about the missing link; they are all missing; there is not a single link. There is not a single place where one species passes over into another species. There is not one single observed instance of the evolution of a higher species from a lower. Development of varieties there has been, but of evolution of a higher species from a lower not one single case. The hypothesis of the evolution of species, and especially of the highest forms of life from the lowest, is a guess pure and simple, without one scientifically observed fact to build upon. But suppose the doctrine of evolution were true, it would not for a moment militate against the argument from design. If there were originally some unorganized protoplasm that developed into all the forms of life and beauty as we see them today, it would be a still more remarkable illustration, in one way, of the wisdom and power of the Creator, for the question would arise, Who put into the primordial protoplasm the power of developing into the universe as we see it today? It would take a more wonderful man to make a watch-hand which would develop into a watch than it would to make a watch outright. And, in one way, it would be a more marvelous illustration of the creative wisdom and power of God, if God had created some primordial protoplasm that developed into the world we now see than if God had made the world at once as we now see it. Nature proves that there is a God.

History proves that there is a God. You take one little patch of history, the history of a single nation or of a few nations, for a few years, and it sometimes seems like a jangle without meaning, only portraying the conflicting ambitions and greeds of men. Might, right, and the weakest going to the wall. But take history in a large way, the history of centuries, take all history, and you will see that back of the jarring and conflicting passions, ambitions, combats and struggles of men, there is an all-governing, all-superintending, all-shaping Providence. You see that throughout all history "one increasing purpose runs," "a power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." History proves that there is a God.

But there is one special history that proves that there is a God, that is the history of Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Great efforts have been put forth to disprove the authenticity of that history; men of the most remarkable genius, of the profoundest scholarship, of untiring activity, have struggled to pull to pieces the history of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the four gospels, and every effort of that kind has met with utter failure. The strongest, the ablest, the most remarkable and scholarly effort ever made was that of David Strauss, in the *Loben Jesu*. It seemed to some for awhile, as if David Strauss had succeeded in taking out of the life of Jesus of Nazareth many things commonly believed. But when the life of Jesus Christ by the great German rationalist was itself subjected to criticism, it went to pieces, until there was nothing left. It was utterly discredited. It would not bear careful and candid examination. Renan, with rare subtlety and literary deftness, endeavored to succeed where Strauss had failed. But his own attempt to eliminate the supernatural from the life of Jesus was less able in almost every way than that of his German predecessor and failed completely. And every other similar effort to pull to pieces and discredit the life of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the four gospels, has failed absolutely. And today it stands established beyond the possibility of candid question that Jesus lived and acted, at least substantially -I believe far more than that- as recorded in the four gospels. It is absolutely impossible for a man to sit down before the four gospels with an unbrassed and bonest mind, determined to find out the truth, and come to any other conclusion than that this four gospel record of the life and words and works of Jesus is substantially accurate history.

If Jesus lived as this Gospel says He did, if He wrought as this Gospel says He wrought, healed the sick, cleansed the leper, raised the dead, fed the five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes, and if, above all, having been put to death, He was raised from the dead, it proves

to a demonstration that back of the works He performed, back of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is God. There is a God.

The history of the individual Christian proves the existence of God. I do not depend upon the argument from design or from history- I once did; I do not depend even upon the argument from the life of Jesus Christ-I once did. I know there is a God because I have personal dealings with Him every day of my life. Some subtle philosopher might construct a very specious argument to prove to me that there is no such person as Charles Alexander; but after all is said I still know that there is, for I have the most intimate relations with him everyday of my life. But I have had more intimate dealings with God than with Mr. Charles Alexander. I know that there is a God before I know that there is such a person as Mr. Charles Alexander. I started out years ago on the hypothesis, that there was a God, and that God acted as the Bible records that He acts. I determined to put this hypothesis to the most rigid test to see if it worked. I have put that hypothesis to the test during a quarter of a century, and it has never failed. If there had not been a God, or if there had been a God different from the one of whom the Bible tells us, I should have made shipwreck of everything years ago. But the hypothesis has never failed; I have risked my life, reputation, work, everything upon the fact that the God of the Bible is. And, friends, I risked and won. THERE IS A GOD. Therefore the man who says that there is no God is a fool; for any man who denies a fact is a fool. He who denies the supreme fact is a supreme fool. Not only is there a God; but He is the supreme fact of nature, of history, of science, of philosophy, of personal life. Look at the first four words of the Bible, and you will read the profoundest philosophy. "In the beginning, God." In the beginning of nature, God; in the beginning of science, God; in the beginning of human history, God; in the beginning of individual experience, God; in the beginning of everything, God. That is the supreme fact; and he who denies it merely because he does not want to believe it is the supreme fool.

II. GOD IS GREAT

GOD IS GREAT That thought comes out in the Bible, from the first verse to the last. Oh, the majesty of God, the infinite greatness of God! This whole universe, about which we are learning such wonderful things every day, is His creative work. The supreme difference between the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of modern thought is this-the teaching of the Bible is an infinite God and an infinitesimal man, except as God's goodness makes him great. The teaching Of modern literature and modern thought is- an infinite man and an infinitesimal god. We live in a day that has a very great man and a very small god. Stop and think. There are one billion four hundred million people like you on this earth to-day. You are just one out of that vast number. Not very big- are you? But wait. Take the whole earth on which these one billion four hundred millions live; it is a very small part of the universe. If the sun were hollow and a hole bored into it, one million four hundred thousand earths could be poured into the sun, and still leave room for them to rattle around. But the sun is only one sun out of suns. Our whole solar system is but one out of many. I was reading an article the other day, on my way from India, in which an eminent man of science said that there are probably at least a million suns as large as ours. Wait a moment! You are only one out of one thousand four hundred million persons on this earth. Of earths such as this upon which we live it would take more than one million four hundred thousand poured into the sun to fill it. Yet the sun is only one out of a million suns; And there may be a million universes such as ours. And God made them all. That God whose name you dared take upon your lips in vain last night; that God whom you dare philosophies about and say how He ought to act. Take one and divide it by fourteen hundred million multiplied by one million four hundred thousand multiplied by one million multiplied by many millions and that is you. Multiply fourteen hundred million by one million four hundred thousand, and that by one million, and that by many millions, and that by infinity, and that is God. And yet you venture to say how God ought to act. If ever a man appears like a consummate idiot, it is when he tries to tell you how

God ought to act. God is infinite, and no number of finites will ever equal the infinite, and the Infinite God is of immeasurably more importance than the whole race of infinitesimal men who inhabit this little globe. Yet you venture to say how God ought to act. Thou fool!

III. GOD IS HOLY.

GOD IS HOLY. How the Bible in every page brings that out! How it labors with all its types, sacrifices, ceremonies, explicit teaching, to impress upon men and women that God is holy. Take the supreme expression of it in I John i. 5, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." In the Scripture lesson tonight I read a passage from Isaiah in which he gives us a bit of his own biography. He was, perhaps, the best man of his time, but when he got one glimpse of God in His holiness, when he saw even the seraphim (the burning ones, glowing in their own holiness) covering their faces and their feet in the presence of the infinitely Holy Jehovah, he was overwhelmed, and cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Men and women of London, if there should burst upon this audience to-night a real vision of God in His holiness, this whole great gathering would fall on their faces and cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone." Not one of you could keep your seats.

IV. WE MUST ALL MEET GOD.

Last thought. You and I some day must meet this holy God. The prophet Amos cries, "Prepare to meet thy God!" (Amos iv. 12). Every man and woman here must some day meet God. The rich man must meet God! The beggar must meet God! The scholar must meet God! The illiterate man must meet God! The nobleman must meet God! The king must meet God! The emperor must meet God! Every one must meet God! The supreme question of life, then, is this: Are you ready to meet God? None of us can tell how soon it may be that we shall meet God. The king of Spain, as the bulletins flashed across the wires to-night, has been very near meeting his God to-day. Some of us may meet Him within the next twenty-four hours; more within the year; many more within five years; and within forty years almost every man and woman in this audience will have met God. Are you ready? If not, I implore you to get ready before leaving this hall tonight.

How can we meet God with joy and not with dismay? There is only one ground upon which man may meet God with joy and not with despair. That ground is the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. God is infinitely holy, and the best of us is but a sinner. The only ground upon which a sinner can meet the holy God is on the ground of the shed blood, the blood of Christ. Any of us, no matter how outcast or vile, can go boldly to the Holy of Holies on the ground of the shed blood, and the best man or woman that ever walked this earth can meet God on no other ground than the shed blood. There is only one adequate preparation for the sinner to meet God, that is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, who bore all our sins on the Cross of Calvary, and as our risen Saviour who is able to set us free from the power of sin.

Men and women, are you ready to meet God? If it be the will of God, I am ready to go up into His presence, and meet Him face to face to-night. Do you say, Have you never sinned? Alas, I have. Sinned so deeply as none of you will ever know, thank God. But, thank God still more, when Jesus Christ was nailed to yonder Cross of Calvary, all my sins were settled. I like a sheep had gone astray. I had turned to my own way, but God laid on Him my sin (Isaiah liii, 6), and the sacrifice God provided I have accepted. I am ready to meet God face to face to-night and look into those eyes of infinite holiness, for all my sins are covered by the atoning blood.

Are you ready to meet God? Let me sum it up. There is a God. God is great. God is holy. You and I must meet Him. There is only one adequate preparation -the acceptance of Christ as our Sin-bearer, our Saviour, Deliverer from the power of sin. Will you accept Christ tonight?