

Title: **SIGNS AND WONDERS FOR TODAY**

Text: Psalm 74:9 and Luke 23:44-45

Subject: *The Meaning of the Rent Veil*

Date: Friday Evening — March 7, 2008

Kingsport Sovereign Grace Ministries

Kingsport, TN

Introduction:

I am here tonight to make an announcement that I am sure will get your attention. I am here to announce that I believe in signs and wonders. The title of my message is “**SIGNS AND WONDERS FOR TODAY.**” God’s church has, from the beginning, had special signs of his favor, of her election, redemption and her acceptance in Christ; and she has such signs today. Tonight, I am going to show you from the Word of God, that there are **SIGNS AND WONDERS FOR TODAY.** Do I have your attention?

If you are taking notes, I have two texts for my message. My first text is found in the 74th Psalm. Let’s begin there. This Psalm is called a “Maschil of Asaph.” The word “maschil” means “instruction. The first eleven verses of the Psalm are sighs of lamentation referring to the desolations of Israel in the time of the Babylonian Captivity. The latter portion of the Psalm refers to God’s past wonders of grace performed for Israel. Those past performances of grace gave hope with regard to the future. Grace experienced is the promise of grace to come. So, as the children of Israel sighed by reason of their captivity in Babylon, they were encouraged to hope for grace by the remembrance of the past.

(Psalms 74:1-9) “Maschil of Asaph. O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? (2) Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt. (3) Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. (4) Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs. (5) *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. (6) But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. (7) They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. (8) They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land. (9) We

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see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.”

THE SIGNS

What were those signs? If you wish to look later at the Book of Exodus, beginning in chapter 25, you will see that when the Lord God commanded Moses to erect the Tabernacle in the wilderness, he gave five specific symbols of his abiding presence with them, symbols of his approval and acceptance of the chosen nation.

1. The Ark of the Covenant, with its Mercy-seat
2. The Fire from heaven upon the Brazen Altar
3. The Shechinah, the Cloudy Pillar Rising from and Resting upon the Mercy-seat
4. The Urim and Thummim in the high Priest’s Breastplate
5. The Spirit of Prophecy — This, too, was intimately connected with the mercy-seat.

When Solomon built the Temple of God in Jerusalem, these signs were carried into the Temple. There they stood as fixed signs and wonders in the hose of God, symbols of God’s presence and his approval of the people he had chosen for himself and redeemed unto himself.

Then, during the days of Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon invaded Jerusalem, destroyed the Hoy City, destroyed the Temple and carried the children of Israel into captivity in Babylon. There they remained for seventy years. When Nebuchadnezzar took the children of Israel into Babylon, he took with him all the vessels of silver and gold out of the Temple and put them in the pagan temple at Babylon.

When the Jews were set free under the hand of Cyrus, Ezra tells us that Cyrus took all those vessels out of the temple in Babylon and gave them to Sheshbazzar, the appointed governor of Jerusalem. They were to be placed again in the Temple at Jerusalem, when it was rebuilt.

But those five signs, those five standing wonders that were in the first Temple were gone forever. We do not know what happened to them. Many speculations have been made.

- Some say that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed them.

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- Others think that Manasseh destroyed them when he set up his idols in the house of God.
- Others are of the opinion that good king Josiah hid them in some secret place, and they were never found.

But no one knows. All we do know is this: — Those five sacred signs and wonders, by which God’s church had been assured of his abiding presence and of their abiding acceptance were gone. For the next five centuries, the Jewish priests faked the ordinances of God! But those outward, visible signs of God’s favor were gone.

- The Ark of the Covenant, with its Mercy-seat
- The Fire from heaven upon the Brazen Altar
- The Shechinah, the Cloudy Pillar Rising from and Resting upon the Mercy-seat
- The Urim and Thummim in the high Priest’s Breastplate
- The Spirit of Prophecy — This, too, was intimately connected with the mercy-seat (Exodus 25:22; 40:34; Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 7:89; 1 Kings 8:10-12).

MT. CALVARY

Jump forward now to that time called “*the fulness of time*,” to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to save his people from their sins. Go with me to my second text — Luke 23:44-45, and to Mt. Calvary.

(Luke 23:44-45) “And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. (45) And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.”

In the verses before us we have Luke’s account of **our Savior’s last three hours of agony** upon the cursed tree, the last three hours of torture he endured for us, as our Substitute, because he was made sin for us. Let us ever read these inspired narratives with reverence, with hearts broken over sin and yet rejoicing at the forgiveness of sin obtained at such a price. May God the Holy Spirit sanctify our eyes, our hearts and our minds as we once more attempt to meditate upon our Lord’s sufferings and to worship him who suffered all the hell of God’s holy wrath for us.

THE DARKNESS

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The Spirit of God here tells that there was darkness over all the earth for three hours. This was not a natural solar eclipse, but a supernatural one, an eclipse specifically performed by God on this occasion. It was an eclipse that the prophet Amos prophesied. — *“It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day”* (Amos 8:9).

The darkness lasted for three hours. And it was attested to by men in other parts of the world who had no idea what was going on in Jerusalem. A man named **Dionysius**, living in Egypt at the time, said, “Either the Divine Being suffers, or suffers with him that suffers, or the frame of the world is dissolving.” Apparently, this eclipse was a complete eclipse of the sun around the entire world at one time, truly a remarkable, miraculous eclipse. For three hours, from high noon until three o’clock, the sun refused to shine. Thus the Lord God gives a vivid, symbolic display of **four things**.

1st The Heinousness of the Crime Being Committed — Though our Savior died and was slaughtered by the hands of wicked men exactly according to the purpose, will and decree of God almighty for the salvation of his elect, God’s decrees did in any way excuse their sin in crucifying him.

Note: Let no one use God’s sovereignty as an excuse for ungodliness!

2nd The Blackness, Darkness, and Blindness of Men’s Hearts By Nature — No impression was made upon these men, though God performed miracles unheard of, before or since, all around them. The fact is, man’s heart by nature is so blind that no acts of providence, either in goodness or in judgment, can be seen by him, unless God takes the scales off his eyes.

3rd The Emptiness and Darkness of Christless Religion — Judaism had become mere ritualism. As such it was altogether darkness. Religion without Christ, without life, without faith, is darkness, no matter how orthodox it appears!

4th The Darkness that Passed Upon and Engulfed Our Savior’s Holy Soul When He was Made Sin For Us — Matthew tells us, at “*about the ninth hour,*” about three o’clock in the afternoon, which was about the time of the slaying and offering of the evening sacrifice, which was an eminent type of Christ, “*Jesus cried with a loud voice.*” He cried out as one in great

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distress, having been silent during the three hours darkness, patiently bearing all his soul sufferings, under a sense of divine wrath, the hiding of his Father's face, and his conflicts with the powers of darkness; but now, in the anguish of his soul, he breaks out with a cry that pierces the darkness, "*saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"

Here our Savior speaks as a man, the man chosen, made, ordained and anointed by God with the oil of gladness above his fellows. As a man, our Lord was upheld and strengthened by the Father, just as we are. As a man he trusted God, loved him and prayed to him, just as we do, only he did so perfectly, without sin! Though now the Father hid his face from him, still he expresses strong faith in him and love for him.

When he is said to be "*forsaken*" of God; the meaning is not that he was separated from the love of God or did not know the reason for his abandonment. Our Surety now stood in our place, bearing our sins. He therefore had to endure abandonment by God the Father to satisfy justice.

This cry, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" expresses the very soul of his sufferings as our Substitute. Indeed, all the wailings and howlings of the damned in hell to all eternity will fall indescribably short of expressing the evil and bitterness of sin. But here we see how vile a thing sin is. When God found our sin upon his darling Son, he forsook him in wrath! **Whenever we read these words, hear them, or think about them — "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" — we ought to immediately realize...**

- How great was the price of our ransom!
- That the Lord our God is infinitely holy and just.
- That the holy Lord God must and will punish all sin.
- That the Lord God Almighty loves his people with an infinite, indescribable, everlasting love!
- God's elect shall never be forsaken, neither in this world nor in the world to come!

THE VEIL RENT

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After that, the Lord Jesus cried again, with a loud voice, and “*yielded up the ghost.*” Our Lord’s strength was not abated. His last word was not the gasping breath of a failing life, but the triumphant shout of a conquering King! The Son of God voluntarily laid down his life for his sheep! He did not lose his spirit; he dismissed it! His work was finished. His mission was complete. Therefore he laid down his life for his people...

- As a Voluntary Surety!
- As a Vicarious Sufferer!
- As a Victorious Savior!

Then, we read, “*and the veil in the temple was rent.*” Matthew is more detailed and more graphic in his account. He wrote, ““*And, behold, the veil in the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom*” (Matt. 27:51).

The typical, symbolic veil was rent. And, at the same instant, the true veil was rent. That is what I want to talk about. **What is the meaning of this rent veil?** Why was it rent?

Try to picture what was happening in Jerusalem. Just a short distance from Mt. Calvary stood Mt. Moriah and the Jews’ temple. It is at the hour of the evening sacrifice. The sun has been darkened by the hand of God for three hours. Thousands were gathered in Jerusalem for the passover. Many were still at Calvary. Others had made their way to the temple. The priest in all his gorgeous robes is going through the now empty rituals of the Jews’ passover. As he meanders around in the holy place, suddenly, the veil of the temple separating the holy place from the most holy place, was ripped apart before his eyes, ripped from top to bottom, as if God himself had taken it in his hands and ripped it. — The holy of holies in the temple was empty!

Remember those five things in Solomon’s temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which were not in the second temple, which was erected after the Babylonish captivity. Those five special signs and symbols of God’s presence were never in this second temple.

- The Ark of the Covenant, with its Mercy-seat
- The Fire from heaven upon the Brazen Altar
- The Shechinah, the Cloudy Pillar Rising from and Resting upon the Mercy-seat
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Though Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were prophets during the restoration, that spirit of prophecy that was connected with the mercy-seat in the holy of holies was no longer present.

Suddenly, as though the sky opened, we are lifted up and carried from the earth into heaven, from the carnal into the spiritual, from mortality into immortality, of which it is written by John when he was in the Spirit, — “*I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*” — In that Temple all is full!

We have no need of a physical temple, for we are the temple of God. Christ is our Temple and we are his temple. Seated now, in the holy place with Christ, we understand and see clearly that Christ is all. Everything in the carnal, earthly, material temple spoke of him. **These are the abiding signs and wonders for today, the signs and wonders of grace that we now see by faith, because of the rent veil.**

- Christ is our Priest — Our Urim (Light) and Thummim (Perfection).
- Christ is our Altar — with the continually burning fire of satisfaction and acceptance. — Christ is the Lamb of God — The Sacrifice consumed upon the altar, by which satisfaction has been made and by which we are accepted of God.
- Christ is the Mercy-Seat — Our Atonement.
- Christ is the Shekinah-glory, the brightness of the glory of the triune God.
- And the Gospel of Christ is the Spirit of Prophecy intimately connected with the Mercy-seat (Revelation 19:10).

(Revelation 19:9-10) “And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. (10) And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Will you hear the Spirit of Prophecy, the Testimony of Jesus Christ?

(Revelation 22:16-17) “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto

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you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star. (17) And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Let us now turn aside, as Moses did at the bush, and see this great sight. What does it mean?

1. **The veil was rent, not consumed by fire.** — Had it been consumed with fire, we might miss its meaning. **Our Lord, by his death did not destroy the way of access to God. He opened it.** Now, we go through the rent veil by his blood into the holiest. The new and living way by which we come to God is paved with gold and sprinkled with blood.

2. **The veil was rent while the temple was still standing in Jerusalem.** — Had the earthquake that rent the rocks and opened graves, struck down the temple or shattered its walls, men might have said that it was the earthquake rent the veil. But now it is made clear to all that no natural convulsion of the earth threw the veil open, making the holy of holies as accessible as the outer court, which all might enter and where all might worship.

3. **The veil was rent in twain.** — It did not fall to pieces, and was not torn to shreds. The rent was clean and straight, made by the invisible hand of the invisible God. Perhaps this exact division into two parts symbolized **the separation of Christ’s soul from his body in death.** Perhaps it symbolized **the throwing open of the great door between earth and heaven,** as John saw in his vision, indicating the complete reconciliation of the fellowship between God and his people by the blood of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Revelation 4:1-2).

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For

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he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(Revelation 4:1-2) “After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. (2) And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.”

4. **The veil was rent from the top to the bottom.** — It was not rent from side to side, nor from the bottom to the top: which might have suggested that it was simply worn out from usage. It was rent from the top to the bottom, **showing that the power which rent it was from above, not from beneath;** that the rending was not of man but of God. It was man that crucified the Lord of Glory, but, “*it pleased the Lord to bruise him; He hath put him to grief.*” Beginning with the roof and ending with the floor, the rent was complete; for God in heaven had done it.

- From the roof to floor there remained not one fragment of the old veil.
- So from heaven to earth, from the throne of God, down to the dwelling of man, there exists not one remnant nor particle of a barrier between sinners and God: — No Sin! — No Curse! — No Condemnation!
- He who openeth and no man shutteth has, with His own hand, and in his own boundless mercy, love and grace, thrown open to the chief of sinners the throne of grace and bids us come in and draw near (Hebrews 4:16).

(Hebrews 4:16) “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The rent veil declares that **Christ is the end of the law.** He finished and fulfilled it. He satisfied and completed it. **Now, we have free and open access the throne of God.** — The rending of the veil was done, as if the temple itself mourned for and testified abhorrence at the crucifixion of Christ. The temple rent, as it were, its garments at the death of its Lord. — **The veil was rent to show that the Lord, who had taken up his residence in the most holy place between the cherubim, over the mercy-seat, in thick darkness, had now moved out and left the house desolate.**

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— The rending of the veil signified the rending of Christ's flesh, the breaking of his body for us, which was typified by the veil (Hebrews 10:20).

The veil was rent to signify the clear, full revelation of God and his saving grace proclaimed in the Gospel, proclaiming the way into the holiest of all, into heaven itself, where Christ is, who entered by his own blood, as our Forerunner (Hebrews 10:9-22).

(Hebrews 10:9-22) “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. (10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. (11) And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: (12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; (13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. (14) For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (15) *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, (16) This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (18) Now where remission of these *is*, *there is* no more offering for sin. (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And *having* an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

5. **The veil was rent in the presence of the Jewish priests**. — They were in the holy place, outside the veil, of course, officiating, lighting the lamps, or placing incense on the golden altar, or arranging the showbread on the golden table. When they saw the solemn rending of the veil, they must have been shocked and terrified. I can picture them covering their eyes lest they should see the hidden glories of that holy chamber they were forbidden to enter. Perhaps Isaiah's words rang in their ears, — “*Woe is me, for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*” (Isaiah 6:5).

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6. **But the veil was rent before their eyes to show that the mercy-seat and the cherubim and the glory were not in that temple, and to point to Christ whose is the true Sacrifice and Mercy-seat and Glory.** — These things are no longer hidden. It is no longer profanity to handle the holy things of the sanctuary, or to gaze upon the golden floor and walls all stained with sacrificial blood, or to go up to the mercy-seat and sit down beneath the very shadow of the glory of God. Indeed, the safest and the most blessed place for our needy souls is the Mercy-Seat, Christ Jesus. Come into the holy place and handle him (1 John 1:1-3; 2:1-2).

(1 John 1:1-3) “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (2) (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) (3) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

(1 John 2:1-2) “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.*”

7. **The veil was rent at the time of the evening sacrifice.** — About three o’clock, when the sun began to set, the lamb was slain, and laid upon the altar. Just at the moment when its blood was shed, and the smoke arose from the fire that was consuming it, the veil was rent in twain. There was an unseen link between the altar and the veil, between the sacrifice and the rending, between the blood-shedding and the removal of the barrier. **It was blood that had done the work. It was blood that had rent the veil and thrown open the mercy-seat: — the blood of “the Lamb, without blemish, and without spot.”**

8. **The veil was rent precisely at the moment when the Son of God died on the cross.** — His death did it! His death opened God’s heaven for our souls. His death opened for us the way of life and brought us into life. It was from the cross that the power emanated which rent the veil. From that place of weakness and shame and agony, came forth the omnipotent

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command, — *“Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors.”* Our Savior’s cry, *“It is finished”* upon Golgotha was the appointed signal, and the instantaneous response was the rending of the veil. The pierced hands of our accepted Sacrifice rent the veil separating God and man. **It was the cross of Christ that rent the veil and opened the new and living way into the holiest of all.**

9. **When the veil was rent, the cherubim which were embroidered on it were rent with it.** — Those cherubim symbolized the Church of God’s elect. Being embroidered into the veil, we see a picture of our identification with Christ in his death. We were nailed with him to the cross. We were crucified with him. With him we died, and were buried, and rose again. In that rent veil we have the temple-symbol of the apostle’s doctrine, concerning our union and oneness with Christ in life and death. — *“I am crucified with Christ.”* — *“Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”*

10. **The rent veil declares that all the law is fulfilled, satisfied and ended.** — *“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”* — *“There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”*

The broken body and shed blood of our Lord opened the sinner’s way into the holiest. These were the tokens of grace and of righteousness. The rending of the veil was not merely an act of God’s power. And it was not merely an act of his grace. Righteousness had done it. Righteousness had rolled away the stone. Righteousness had burst the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. **The barrier of separation has been righteously removed.** We have a righteous, as well as a gracious entrance into the holy place. **God gives sinners a righteous as well as gracious welcome at his throne!**

COME AND WELCOME

By the rent veil the God of Glory cries to poor sinners, “Come, and welcome!” That which the blood of bulls and goats could never do, Christ has done with his own precious blood! Thank God forever, his is better blood! His blood knocks but once, and the gate flies open. His blood but once touches the sword of fire, and it is quenched. Not a moment is lost. The fulness of the time has come. **God has unbarred the door! He has**

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thrown open his Mercy-Seat to poor, needy sinners, and rushes to receive his banished ones!

The veil, then, has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The way is open. The blood is sprinkled. The Mercy-Seat is accessible. And the voice of our Great High Priest, seated on that Mercy-Seat, bids us enter in, and to enter in boldly, without fear. — *“Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith.”*

Let us therefore enter in and find the mercy and grace we need in him!

Entering in is our only security and our only joy. The only way we can enter in by Christ the Way is in the confident boldness of *“the full assurance of faith,”* trusting him alone as our all-sufficient, gloriously effectual Savior.

- Not to come with such boldness is unbelief.
- Not to come in the full assurance of faith is the presumption.
- To draw near with an *“evil conscience”* is to declare our belief that the blood of the Lamb is not of itself enough to give the sinner a good conscience and a fearless access to the throne of grace.

“May I then draw near as I am, in virtue of the efficacy of the sprinkled blood?” Yes, you may! How else could you come? — “May I be bold at once?” Indeed you may! **If ever you see the blood upon mercy-seat, that will give you the boldness and full assurance of faith by which you may enter it.** Do you see it? Has God the Holy Spirit given you eyes to see? Then come boldly! Come boldly now! Come in the full assurance of faith, not supposing it possible that that God who has provided such a mercy-seat can do anything but welcome you; that such a mercy-seat can be anything to you but the place of pardon, or that the gospel out of which every sinner that has believed it has extracted peace, can contain anything but peace to you.

The rent veil is liberty of access. The sprinkled blood is boldness, — boldness for the needy sinner. **The rent veil has a voice. The blood is the voice. It speaks pardon, peace, salvation and eternal life to sinners.** *“Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart!”* Make haste and enter in!

Amen.